

A N
E S S A Y
ON THE
FIRST PRINCIPLES
OF
GOVERNMENT;
AND ON THE NATURE OF
Political, Civil, and Religious
L I B E R T Y.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLY, LL.D. F.R.S.

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ON THE

FIRST PRINCIPLES

OF

GOVERNMENT

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AND ON THE

Political, Civil, and Religious

LIBERTY

BY JOSEPH WILSON

DUBLIN

Printed for James Williams, in London, Town

MCCORMACK



THE
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 PREFACE.

THIS publication owes its rise to the *remarks* I formerly wrote *on Dr. Brown's proposal for a code of education*. Several persons who were pleased to think favourably of that performance (in which I was led to mention the subject of civil and religious liberty) were desirous

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that

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that I should treat of it more at large, and without any immediate view to the doctor's work. It appeared to them, that some of the views I had given of this important, but difficult subject, were new, and showed it, in a clearer light than any in which they had seen it represented before. They thought I had placed the foundation of those most valuable interests of mankind on a broader and firmer basis, in consequence of my availing myself of a more accurate and extensive system of morals and policy, than was adopted by Mr. Locke, and others who formerly wrote upon this subject.

I have

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I have endeavoured to answer the wishes of my friends, in the best manner I am able ; and, at the same time, I have retained the substance of the former treatise, having distributed the several parts of it into the body of this.

Let it be observed however, in this treatise, I propose no more than to consider *the first principles* of civil and religious liberty, and to explain some leading ideas upon the subject. For a more extensive view of it, as affecting a greater variety of particulars in the system of government, I refer to *the course of lectures on*
A. 3. *history*

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history and civil policy; a syllabus of which is printed in the *Essay on a course of liberal education for civil and active life*, and the whole of which, with enlargements, I propose to publish in due time. I make no apology for the *freedom* with which I have written. The subject is, in the highest degree, interesting to humanity, it is open to philosophical discussion, and I have taken no greater liberties than becomes a philosopher, a man, and an Englishman. Having no other views than to promote a thorough knowledge of this important subject, not being sensible of any
bias

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biass to mislead me in my inquiries, and conscious of the uprightness of my intentions, I freely submit my thoughts to the examination of all impartial judges, and the friends of their country and of mankind. They who know the fervour of generous feelings will be sensible, that I have expressed myself with no more warmth than the importance of the subject necessarily prompted, in a breast not naturally the coldest; and that to have appeared more indifferent, I could not have been sincere.

It

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It will be a great mistake to imagine, that, in this treatise, I speak the language of *any party*. I only give my own ideas of things, without the concurrence of any person whatever ; so that if any thing in them be wrong, myself only am answerable for it.

Notwithstanding the ardour of mind with which, it will be evident, some parts of the following treatise were written, the warmth with which I have espoused the cause of liberty, and the severity with which I have animadverted upon whatever I apprehend to be unfavourable

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unfavourable to it; I think I cannot be justly accused of party zeal, because it will be found that I have treated all parties with equal freedom. Indeed, such is the usual violence of human passions, when any thing interesting to them is contended for, that the best cause in the world is not sufficient to prevent intemperance and excess; so that it is easy to see too much to blame in all parties: and it by no means follows, that, because a man disapproves of the conduct of one, that he must, therefore, approve of that of its opposite. The greatest enemy of popery may see something

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thing he dislikes in the conduct of the first reformers, the warmest zeal against episcopacy is consistent with a just sense of the faults of the puritans, and much more may an enemy of Charles the first, be an enemy of Cromwell also.

T H E



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THE

INTRODUCTION.

*Of the First Principles of Government,
and the Nature of Liberty.*

MAN derives two capital advantages from the superiority of his intellectual powers.

The first is, that, as an individual, he possesses a certain comprehension of mind, whereby he contemplates and enjoys the past and the future, as well as the present. By this means his happiness is less dependent on temporary circumstances and sensations. Ideas collected from a certain limited space, on each

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side

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side of the present moment, are always ready to crowd upon his mind, and to temper, and exalt his feelings.

This space, which is the sphere of a man's comprehension, of which he has the enjoyment, and which may be called the extent of his *present time*, is greater or less, in proportion to the progress he has made in intellect, and his advancement above mere animal nature ; and it is generally growing larger during the whole course of our lives. A child is sensible of nothing beyond the present moment, being little more than a brute animal ; whereas the actual feelings of persons advanced in life never depend wholly upon the present moment, but are greatly influenced both by the remembrance of what is past, and the expectation of what is future.

These intellectual pleasures and pains, in many cases, wholly over-power all temporary

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temporary sensations; whereby some men, of great and superior minds, enjoy a state of permanent and equable felicity, in a great measure independent of the uncertain accidents of life. In such minds the idea of things, that are seen to be the cause and effect of one another, perfectly coalesce into one, and present but one common image. Thus all the ideas of evil absolutely vanish, in the idea of the greater good with which it is connected, or of which it is productive.

To this comprehension of mind, which is extending with the experience of every day, no bounds can be set. Nay, it should seem, that while our faculties of perception and action remain in the same vigour, our progress towards perfection must be continually accelerated; and that nothing but a future existence, in advantageous circumstances, is requisite to advance a mere man above

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every thing we can now conceive of excellence and perfection. This train of thought may, in some measure, enable us to conceive wherein consists the superiority of angelic beings, whose sphere of comprehension, that is, whose *present time*, may be of proportionably greater extent than ours, owing to the greater extent of their recollection and foresight ; and even give us some faint idea of the incomprehensible excellence and happiness of the Divine Being, in whose view nothing is past or future, but to whom the whole compass of duration is, to every real purpose, without distinction present.

“ Who fills his own eternal now,

“ And sees our ages waste.”

WATTS.

The next advantage resulting from the same principle, and which is, in many respects, both the cause and effect of the former, is, that the human species

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cies itself is capable of a similar and unbounded improvement; whereby mankind in a later age are greatly superior to mankind in a former age, the individuals being taken at the same time of life. Of this progress of the species, brute animals are more incapable than they are of that relating to individuals. No horse of this age seems to have any advantage over the individuals of this kind that lived many centuries ago; and if there be any improvement in the species, it is owing to our manner of breeding and training them. But a man at this time, who has been tolerably well educated, in an improved christian country, is a being possessed of much greater power, to be, and to make happy, than a person of the same age, in the same, or any other country, some centuries ago. And, for this reason, I make no doubt, that a person some centuries hence will, at the same age, be as much superior to us.

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The great instrument in the hand of divine providence, of this progress of the species towards perfection, is *society*, and consequently *government*. In a state of nature the powers of a single man are dissipated by an attention to a multiplicity of objects. The employments of all are similar. From generation to generation every man does the same that every other does, or has done; and no person begins where another ends; at least, general improvements are exceeding slow, and uncertain. This we see exemplified in all barbarous nations, and especially in countries thinly inhabited, where the connections of the people are slight, and consequently society and government very imperfect; and it may be seen more particularly in North America, and Greenland. Whereas a state of more perfect society admits of a proper distribution and division of the objects of human attention. In such a state, men are connected with
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and subservient to one another ; so that, while one man confines himself to one single object, another may give the same undivided attention to another object.

Thus the powers of all have their full effect : and hence arise improvements in all the conveniences of life, and in every branch of knowledge. In this state of things, it requires but a few years to comprehend the whole preceding progress of any one art or science ; and the rest of a man's life, in which his faculties are the most perfect, may be given to the extension of it. If, by this means, one art or science should grow too large for an easy comprehension in a moderate space of time, a commodious subdivision will be made. Thus all knowledge will be subdivided and extended ; and *knowledge*, as Lord *Bacon* observes, being *power*, the human powers will, in fact, be increased ; nature, including both its materials, and its laws, will be more
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at our command; men will make their situation in this world abundantly more easy and comfortable; they will probably prolong their existence in it, and will grow daily more happy, each in himself, and more able (and, I believe, more disposed) to communicate happiness to others. Thus, whatever was the beginning of this world, the end will be glorious and paradisaical, beyond what our imaginations can now conceive. Extravagant as some may suppose these views to be, I think I could show them to be fairly suggested by the true theory of human nature, and to arise from the natural course of human affairs. But, for the present, I wave this subject, the contemplation of which always makes me happy.

Government being the great instrument of this progress of the human species towards this glorious state, that form of government will have a just claim

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claim to our approbation which favours this progress, and that must be condemned in which it is retarded. Let us then, my fellow citizens, consider the business of government with these enlarged views, and trace some of the fundamental principles of it, by an attention to what is most conducive to the happiness of mankind at present, and most favourable to the increase of this happiness in futurity; and, perhaps, we may understand this intricate subject, with some of its most important circumstances, better than we have done; at least we may see some of them in a clearer and stronger point of light.

To begin with first principles, we must, for the sake of gaining clear ideas on the subject, do what almost all political writers have done before us; that is, we must suppose a number of people existing, who experience the inconvenience of living independent and unconnected

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nected ; who are exposed, without redress, to insults and wrongs of every kind ; and too weak to procure themselves many of the advantages, which they are sensible might easily be compassed by united strength. These people, if they would engage the protection of the whole body, and join their force in enterprizes and undertakings calculated for their common good, must voluntarily resign some part of their natural liberty, and submit their conduct to the direction of the community : for without these concessions, such an alliance, attended with such advantages, could not be formed.

Were these people few in number, and living within a small distance of one another, it might be easy for them to assemble upon every occasion, in which the whole body was concerned ; and every thing might be determined by the votes of the majority, provided they
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had previously agreed that the votes of a majority should be decisive. But were the society numerous, their habitations remote, and the occasions in which the whole body must interpose frequent, it would be absolutely impossible that all the members of the state should assemble, or give their attention to public business. In this case, whether, with *Rousseau*, it be a giving up of their liberty or not, there must be deputies, or public officers, appointed to act in the name of the whole body; and, in a state of very great extent, where all the people could never be assembled, the whole power of the community must necessarily, and almost irreversibly, be lodged in the hands of these deputies. In England, the king, the hereditary lords, and the electors of the house of commons, are these *standing* deputies; and the members of the house of commons are, again, the *temporary* deputies of this last order of the state.

In

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In all states, great or small, the sentiments of that body of men in whose hands the supreme power of the society is lodged, must be understood to be the sentiments of the whole body, if there be no other method in which the sentiments of the whole body can be expressed. These deputies, or representatives of the people, will make a wrong judgment, and pursue wrong measures, if they consult not the good of the whole society, whose representatives they are ; just as the people themselves would make a wrong judgment, and pursue wrong measures, if they did not consult their own good, provided they could be assembled for that purpose ; but, like the people, in whose place they stand, no power on earth has a right to control their judgments. No maxims or rules of policy can be binding upon them, but such as they themselves shall judge to be conducive to the public good. Their own
reason

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reason and conscience are their only guide, and the people, in whose name they act, their only judge.

In these circumstances, if I be asked what I mean by *liberty*, I should chuse for the sake of greater clearness, to divide it into two kinds, *political*, and *civil*; and the importance of having clear ideas on this subject will be my apology for the innovation. *Political liberty*, I would say, consists in the power, which the members of the state reserve to themselves, of arriving at the public offices, or at least of having votes in the nomination of those who fill them: and I would chuse to call *civil liberty* that power over their own actions, which the members of the state reserve to themselves, and which their officers must not infringe. *Political liberty*, therefore, is equivalent to the right of magistracy, being the claim that any member of the state hath, to

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have his private opinion or judgment become that of the public, and thereby control the actions of others ; whereas civil liberty, extends no farther than to a man's own conduct, and signifies the right he has to be exempt from the control of the society, or its agents ; that is, the power he has of providing for his own advantage and happiness. It is a man's civil liberty, which is originally in its full force, and part of which he sacrifices when he enters into a state of society ; and political liberty is that which he may or may not acquire in the compensation he receives for it. For he may either stipulate to have a voice in the publick determinations, or, as far as the public determination doth take place, he may submit to be governed wholly by others. Of these two kinds of liberty, which it is of the greatest importance to distinguish, I shall treat in the order in which I have mentioned them.

P A R T



PART I.

O F

POLITICAL LIBERTY.

IN countries where every member of the society enjoys an equal power of arriving at the supreme offices, and consequently of directing the strength and the sentiments of the whole community, there is a state of the most perfect political liberty. On the other hand, in countries where a man is, by his birth or fortune, excluded from these offices, or from a power of voting for proper persons to fill them; that man, whatever be the form of the govern-

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ment, or whatever civil liberty, or power over his own actions he may have, has no power over those of another, has no share in the government, and therefore has no political liberty at all. Nay his own conduct, as far as the society does interfere, is, in all cases, directed by others.

It may be said, that no society on earth was ever formed in the manner represented above. I answer, it is true; because all governments whatever have been, in some measure, compulsory, tyrannical, and oppressive in their origin; but the method I have described must be allowed to be the only equitable and fair method of forming a society. And since every man retains, and can never be deprived of his natural right (founded on a regard to the general good) of relieving himself from all oppression, that is, from every thing that has been imposed upon him without his own consent;

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sent; this can be the only true and proper foundation of all the governments subsisting in the world, and that to which the people who compose them have an unalienable right to bring them back.

It must necessarily be understood, therefore, whether it be expressed or not, that all people live in society for their mutual advantage; so that the good and happiness of the members, that is the majority of the members of any state, is the great standard by which every thing relating to that state must finally be determined. And though it may be supposed, that a body of people may be bound by a voluntary resignation of all their interests (which they have been so infatuated as to make) to a single person, or to a few, it can never be supposed that the resignation is obligatory to their posterity; because it is manifestly *contrary to the good of the whole that it should be so.*

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I own it is rather matter of surprise to me, that this great object of all government should have been so little insisted on by our great writers who have treated of this subject, and that more use hath not been made of it. In treating of particular regulations in states, this principle necessarily obtruded itself; all arguments in favour of any law being always drawn from a consideration of its tendency to promote the public good; and yet it has often escaped the notice of writers in discoursing on the first principles of society, and the subject of civil and religious liberty.

This one general idea, properly pursued, throws the greatest light upon the whole system of policy, morals, and, I may add, theology too. To a mind not warped by theological and metaphysical subtilties, the divine being appears to be actuated by no other views than

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than the noblest we can conceive, the happiness of his creatures. Virtue and right conduct consist in those affections and actions which terminate in the public good; justice and veracity, for instance, having nothing intrinsically excellent in them, separate from their relation to the happiness of mankind; and the whole system of right to power, property, and every thing else in society, must be regulated by the same consideration: the decisive question, when any of these subjects are examined being; what is it that the good of the community requires?

Let it be observed, in this place, that I by no means assert, that the good of mankind requires a state of the most perfect political liberty. This indeed, is not possible, except in exceeding small states; in none, perhaps, that are so large as even the republics of ancient Greece; or as Genoa, or Geneva in modern times.

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times. Such small republics as these, if we judge from experience, are not desirable ; because not favourable to great improvements and to happiness. If they were desirable, they would be impracticable ; because a state of perfect equality, in communities or individuals, can never be preserved, while some are more powerful, more enterprising, and more successful in their attempts than others. And an ambitious nation could not wish for a fairer opportunity of arriving at extensive empire, than finding the neighbouring countries cantoned out into a number of small governments, which could have no power to withstand it singly, and which could never form sufficiently extensive confederacies, or act with sufficient unanimity, and expedition, to oppose it with success. Supposing, therefore, that in order to prevent the greatest of all inconveniences, very extensive, and consequently absolute monarchies, it may be expedient to
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have such states as England, France, and Spain ; even here political liberty must, in some measure, be restrained ; but in what manner a restraint should be put upon it, and how far it should extend, is not easy to be ascertained. In general, it should seem, that none but persons of considerable fortune should be capable of arriving at the highest offices in the government ; not only because, all other circumstances being equal, such persons will generally have had the best education, and consequently be the best qualified to act for the public good ; but also, as they will necessarily have the most property at stake, and will, therefore, be most interested in the fate of their country.

For the same reason, it may, perhaps, be more eligible, that those who are extremely dependent should not be allowed to have votes in the nomination of the chief magistrates ; because this
might

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might in some instances, be only throwing more votes into the hands of those persons on whom they depend. But if, in every state of considerable extent, we suppose a gradation of elective offices, and if we likewise suppose the lowest classes of the people to have votes in the nomination of the lowest officers, and, as they increase in wealth and importance, to have a share in the choice of persons to fill the higher posts, till they themselves be admitted candidates for places of public trust; we shall, perhaps, form an idea of as much political liberty as is consistent with the state of mankind. And I think experience shews, that the highest offices of all, equivalent to that of king, ought to be in some measure hereditary, as in England; elective monarchies having generally been the theatre of cabals, confusion, and misery.

But

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But though the exact medium of political liberty be not easily fixed, it is not of much consequence to do it ; since a considerable degree of perfection in government will admit of great varieties in this respect ; and the extreme of political slavery, which excludes all persons, except one, or a very few, from having access to the chief magistracy, or from having votes in the choice of magistrates, is easily marked out, and the fatal effects of it are very striking. For such is the state of mankind, that persons possessed of unbounded power will generally act as if they forgot the proper nature and design of their station, and pursue their own interest, though it be opposite to that of the community at large.

But if there be any truth in the principles above laid down, it must be a fundamental maxim in all governments, that if any man hold what is called a
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high rank, or enjoy privileges, and prerogatives in a state, it is because the good of the state requires that he should hold that rank, or enjoy those privileges; and such persons, whether they be called kings, senators, or nobles; or by whatever names, or titles, they be distinguished, are, to all intents and purposes, the servants of the public, and accountable to the people for the discharge of their respective offices.

If such magistrates abuse their trust, in the people, therefore, lies the right of deposing, and consequently of punishing them. And the only reason why abuses which have crept into offices have been connived at, is, that the correcting of them, by having recourse to first principles, and the people taking into their own hands their right to appoint or change their officers, and to ascertain the bounds of their authority, is far from being easy, except

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except in small states ; so that the remedy would often be worse than the disease.

✕ But, in the largest states, if the abuses of government should, at any time, be great and manifest ; if the servants of the people, forgetting their masters, and their master's interest, should pursue a separate one of their own ; if, instead of considering that they are made for the people, they should consider the people as made for them ; if the oppressions and violations of right should be great, flagrant, and universally resented ; if the tyrannical governors should have no friends but a few sycophants, who had long preyed upon the vitals of their fellow citizens, and who might be expected to desert a government, whenever their interests should be detached from it : if, in consequence of these circumstances, it should become manifest, that the risque, which would be run in
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attempting a revolution would be trifling, and the evils which might be apprehended from it, were far less than these which were actually suffered, and which were daily increasing; in the name of God, I ask, what principles are those, which ought to restrain an injured and insulted people from asserting their natural rights, and from changing, or even punishing their governors, that is their servants, who had abused their trust; or from altering the whole form of their government, if it appeared to be of a structure so liable to abuse?

To say that these forms of government have been long established, and that these oppressions have been long suffered, without any complaint, is to supply the strongest argument for their abolition. Lawyers, who are governed by rules and precedents, are very apt to fall into mistakes, in determining what is right and lawful, in cases which are,
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in their own nature, prior to any fixed laws or precedents. The only reason for the authority of precedents and general rules in matters of law and government, is, that all persons may know what is law ; which they could not do if the administration of it was not uniform, and the same in similar cases.

X But if the precedents and general rules themselves be a greater grievance than the violation of them, and the establishment of better precedents, and better general rules, what becomes of their obligation? The necessity of the thing, in the changing course of human affairs, obliges all governments to alter their general rules, and to set up new precedents in affairs of less importance ; and why may not a proportionably greater necessity plead as strongly for the alteration of the most general rules, and for setting up new precedents in matters of the greatest consequence, affecting the most fundamental principles of any go-

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vernment, and the distribution of power among its several members? X

Nothing can more justly excite the indignation of an honest and oppressed citizen, than to hear a prelate, who enjoys a considerable benefice, under a corrupt government, pleading for its support by those abominable perversions of scripture, which have been too common on this occasion; as by urging in its favour that passage of St. Paul, *The powers which be are ordained of God*, and others of a similar import. It is a sufficient answer to such an absurd quotation as this, that, for the same reason, the powers which *will be* will be ordained of God also.

Something, indeed, might have been said in favour of the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, at the time when they were first started; but a man must be infatuated who will not renounce

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renounce them now. The Jesuits, about two centuries ago, in order to vindicate their king-killing principles, happened, among other arguments, to make use of this great and just principle, that all civil power is ultimately derived from the people : and their adversaries, in England, and elsewhere, instead of shewing how they abused and perverted that fundamental principle of all government in the case in question, did, what disputants warmed with controversy are very apt to do ; they denied the principle itself, and maintained that all civil power is derived from God, as if the Jewish theocracy had been established throughout the whole world. From this maxim it was a clear consequence, that the governments, which at any time subsist, being the ordinance of God, and the kings which are at any time upon the throne, being the vicegerents of God, must not be opposed.

So long as there were recent examples of good kings deposed, and some of them massacred by wild enthusiasts, some indulgence might be allowed to those warm, but weak friends of society, who would lay hold of any principle, which, however ill founded, would supply an argument for more effectually preserving the publick peace; but to maintain the same absurd principles at this day, when the danger from which they served to shelter us is over, and the heat of controversy is abated, shews the strongest and most blameable prepossession. Writers in defence of them do not deserve a serious answer: and to alledge those principles in favour of a corrupt government, which nothing can excuse but their being brought in favour of a good one, is unpardonable.

The history of this controversy about the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resist-

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non-resistance, affords a striking example of the danger of having recourse to false principles in controversy. They may serve a particular turn, but, in other cases, may be capable of the most dangerous application; whereas universal truth will, in all possible cases, have the best consequences, and be ever favourable to the true interests of mankind.

X It will be said, that it is opening a door to rebellion, to assert that magistrates, abusing their power, may be set aside by the people, who are of course their own judges when that power is abused. May not the people, it is said, abuse their power, as well as their governors? I answer, it is very possible they may abuse their power: it is possible they may imagine themselves oppressed when they are not: it is possible that their animosity may be artfully and unreasonably inflamed, by ambitious and enterprising men, whose views
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are often best answered by popular tumults and insurrections ; and the people may suffer in consequence of their folly and precipitancy. But what man is there, or what body of men (whose right to direct their own conduct was never called in question) but are liable to be imposed upon, and to suffer in consequence of their mistaken apprehensions and precipitate conduct ?

With respect to large societies, it is very improbable, that the people should be too soon alarmed, so as to be driven to these extremities. In such cases, the power of the government, that is, of the governors, must be very extensive and arbitrary ; and the power of the people scattered, and difficult to be united ; so that, if a man have common sense, he will see it to be madness to propose, or to lay any measure for a general insurrection against the government, except in case of very general and great oppression.

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oppression. Even patriots, in such circumstances, will consider, that present evils always appear greater in consequence of their being present; but that the future evils of a revolt, and a temporary anarchy, may be much greater than are apprehended at a distance. They will, also, consider, that unless their measures be perfectly well laid, and their success decisive, ending in a change, not of men, but of things; not of governors, but of the rules and administration of government, they will only rivet their chains the faster, and bring upon themselves and their country tenfold ruin.

The case, I own, may be otherwise in less extensive states, where the power of the governors is comparatively small, and the power of the people great, and soon united. These fears, therefore, may be prudent in Venice, in Genoa, or in the small cantons of Switzerland;

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but it were to the last degree, absurd to extend them to Great-Britain.

The English history will inform us, that the people of this country have always borne extreme oppression, for a long time before there has appeared any danger of a general insurrection against the government. What a series of encroachments upon their rights did even the feudal barons, whose number was not very considerable, and whose power was great, bear from William the Conqueror, and his successors, before they broke out into actual rebellion on that account, as in the reigns of king John, and Henry the third ! And how much were the lowest orders of the poor commons trampled upon with impunity by both, till a much later period ; when, all the while, they were so far from attempting any resistance, or even complaining of the gross infringements of their rights,

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rights, that they had not so much as the idea of their having any rights to be trampled upon! After the people had begun to acquire property, independance, and an idea of their natural rights, how long did they bear a load of old and new oppressions under the Tudors, but more especially under the Stuarts, before they broke out into what the friends of arbitrary power affect to call *the grand rebellion*! And how great did that obstinate civil war show the power of the king to be, notwithstanding the most intolerable and wanton abuse of it! At the close of the year 1642, it was more probable that the king would have prevailed than the parliament; and his success would have been certain, if his conduct had not been as weak, as it was wicked.

So great was the power of the crown, that, after the restoration, Charles the second was tempted to act the same
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part with his father, and actually did it, in a great measure, with impunity; till, at last, he was even able to reign without parliaments; and if he had lived much longer, he would, in all probability, have been as arbitrary as the king of France. His brother James the second, had almost subverted both the civil and religious liberties of his country, in the short space of four years, and might have done it completely, if he could have been content to have proceeded with more caution; nay, he might have succeeded notwithstanding his precipitancy, if the divine being had not, at that critical time, raised up William the third of glorious memory, for our deliverance. But, God be thanked, the government of this country is now fixed upon so good and firm a basis, and is so generally acquiesced in, that they are only the mere tools of a court party, or the narrow minded bigots among the inferior clergy,

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clergy, who, to serve their own low purposes, do now and then promote the cry, that the church or the state is in danger.

X As to what is called the crime of *rebellion*, we have nothing to do either with the name, or the thing, in the case before us. That term, if it admit of any definition, is an attempt to subvert a lawful government ; but the question is, whether an oppressive government, though it have been ever so long established can be a lawful one ; or, to cut off all dispute about words, if lawful, legal, and constitutional, be maintained to be the same thing, whether the lawful, legal, and constitutional government be a *good* government, or one in which sufficient provision is made for the happiness of the subjects of it. If it fail in this essential character, respecting the true end and object of all civil government, no other property or title,

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tle,

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tle, with which it may be dignified, ought to shelter it from the generous attack of the noble and daring patriot. If the bold attempt be precipitate, and unsuccessful, the tyrannical government will be sure to term it rebellion, but that censure cannot make the thing itself less glorious. The memory of such brave, though unsuccessful and unfortunate friends of liberty, and of the rights of mankind, as that of Harmodius and Aristogiton among the Athenians, and Russel and Sidney in our own country, will be had in everlasting honour by their grateful fellow citizens; and history will speak another language than laws.

If it be asked how far a people may lawfully go in punishing their chief magistrates, I answer that, if the enormity of the offence (which is of the same extent as the injury done to the public) be considered, any punishment is justifiable

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fiable that a man can incur in human society. X It may be said, there are no laws to punish those governors, and we must not condemn persons by laws made *ex post facto*; for this conduct will vindicate the most obnoxious measures of the most tyrannical administration. But I answer, that this is a case, in its own nature, prior to the establishment of any laws whatever; as it affects the very being of society, and defeats the principal ends for which recourse was originally had to it. There may be no fixed law against an open invader who should attempt to seize upon a country, with a view to enslave all its inhabitants; but must not the invader be apprehended, and even put to death, though he have broken no express law then in being, or none of which he was properly apprized? And why should a man, who takes the advantage of his being king, or governor, to subvert the laws and liberties of his country, be considered

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in any other light than that of a foreign invader? Nay his crime is much more atrocious, as he was appointed the guardian of the laws and liberties, which he subverts, and therefore was under the strongest obligation to maintain. X

In a case, therefore, of this highly criminal nature, *salus populi suprema est lex*. That must be done which the good of the whole requires; and, generally, kings deposed, banished, or imprisoned, are highly dangerous to a nation; because, let them have governed ever so ill, it will be the interest of some to be their partisans, and to attach themselves to their cause.

It will be supposed, that these observations have a reference to what passed in England in the year 1648. Let it be supposed. Surely a man, and an Englishman, may be at liberty to give his opinion, freely and without disguise concerning

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concerning a transaction of so old a date. Charles the first, whatever he was in his private character, which is out of the question here, was certainly a very bad king of England. During a course of many years, and notwithstanding repeated remonstrances, he governed by maxims utterly subversive of the fundamental and free constitution of this country; and, therefore, he deserved the severest punishment. If he was misled by his education, or his friends, he was, like any other criminal, in the same circumstances, to be pitied, but by no means to be spared on that account.

From the nature of things it was necessary that the opposition should begin from a few, who may, therefore, be stiled a *faction*; but after the civil war (which necessarily ensued from the king's obstinacy, and in which he had given repeated instances of dissimula-

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tion and treachery) there was evidently no safety, either for the faction or the nation, short of his death. It is to be regretted, that the situation of things was such, that his death could not be voted by the whole nation, or their representatives solemnly assembled for that purpose. Such a transaction would have been an immortal honour to this country, whenever the superstitious notion of the *sacredness of kingly power* shall be obliterated. A notion which has been extremely useful in the infant state of societies ; but which, like other superstitions, subsists long after it hath ceased to be of use.

The sum of what hath been advanced upon this head, is a maxim, than which nothing is more true, that *every government, whatever be the form of it, is originally, and antecedent to its present form, an equal republic* ; and, consequently, that every man, when he comes

comes to be sensible of his natural rights, and to feel his own importance, will consider himself as fully equal to any other person whatever. The consideration of riches and power, however acquired, must be entirely set aside, when we come to these first principles. The very idea of property, or right of any kind, is founded upon a regard to the general good of the society, under whose protection it is enjoyed; and nothing is properly *a man's own*, but what general rules, which have for their object the good of the whole, give to him. † To whomsoever the society delegates its power, it is delegated to them for the more easy management of public affairs, and in order to make the more effectual provision for the happiness of the whole. † Whoever enjoys property, or riches in the state, enjoys them for the good of the state, as well as for himself; and whenever those powers, riches, or rights of any kind, are

are abused, to the injury of the whole, that awful and ultimate tribunal, in which every citizen hath an equal voice, may demand the resignation of them; and in circumstances, where regular commissions from this abused public cannot be had, every man, who has power, and who is actuated with the sentiments of the public, may assume a public character, and bravely redress public wrongs. In such dismal and critical circumstances, the stifled voice of an oppressed country is a loud call upon every man, possessed with a spirit of patriotism, to exert himself; and whenever that voice shall be at liberty, it will ratify and applaud the action, which it could not formally authorize.

In large states, this ultimate seat of power, this tribunal to which lies an appeal from every other, and from which no appeal can even be imagined, is too much hid, and kept out of sight.

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fight by the present complex forms of government, which derive their authority from it. Hence hath arisen a want of clearness and consistency in the language of the friends of liberty. Hence the preposterous and slavish maxim, that whatever is enacted by that body of men, in whom the supreme power of the state is vested, must, in all cases, be implicitly obeyed; and that no attempt to repeal an unjust law can be vindicated, beyond a simple remonstrance addressed to the legislators. A case, which is very intelligible, but which can never happen, will demonstrate the absurdity of such a maxim.

✕ Suppose the king of England, and the two houses of parliament, should make a law, in all the usual forms, to exempt the members of either house from paying taxes to the government, or to appropriate to themselves the property

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property of their fellow citizens. A law like this would open the eyes of the whole nation, and show them the true principles of government, and the power of governors. The nation would see that the most regular governments might become tyrannical, and their governors oppressive, by separating their interest from that of the people whom they governed. Such a law would shew them to be but servants, and servants who had shamefully abused their trust. In such a case, every man for himself would lay his hand upon his sword, and the authority of the supreme power of the state would be annihilated.

So plain are these first principles of all government, and political liberty, that I will take upon me to say, it is impossible a man should not be convinced of them, who brings to the subject a mind free from the grossest and meanest

POLITICAL LIBERTY. 47

meanest prejudices. Whatever be the form of any government, whoever be the supreme magistrates, or whatever be their number ; that is, to whomsoever the power of the society is delegated, their authority is, in its own nature, reverfible. No man can be fupposed to resign his natural liberty, but on *conditions*. These conditions, whether they be expreffed or not, must be violated, whenever the plain and obvious ends of government are not answered ; and a delegated power, perverted from the intention for which it was bestowed, expires of courfe. Magistrates, therefore, who confult not the good of the public, and who employ their power to opprefs the people, are a public nuisance, and their power is abrogated *ipfo facto*.

This, however, can only be the cafe in extreme oppreffion ; when the blessings of fociety and civil government,
great

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great and important as they are, are bought too dear ; when it is better not to be governed at all than to be governed in such a manner ; or, at least, when the hazard of a change of government would be apparently the less evil of the two ; and, therefore, these occasions rarely occur in the course of human affairs. It may be asked, what should a people do in case of less general oppression, and only particular grievances ; when the deputies of the people make laws which evidently favour themselves, and bear hard upon the body of the people they represent, and such as they would certainly disapprove, could they be assembled for that purpose ? I answer, that when this appears to be very clearly the case, as it ought by all means to do (since, in many cases, if the government have not power to enforce a bad law, it will not have power to enforce a good one) the first step which a wise and

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and moderate people will take is to make a remonstrance to the legislature; and if that be not practicable, or be not heard; still, if the complaints be general, and loud, a wise prince and ministry will pay regard to them; or they will, at length, be weary of enforcing a penal law which is generally abhorred and disregarded; when they see the people will run the risque of the punishment, if it cannot be evaded, rather than quietly submit to the injunction. And a regard to the good of society will certainly justify this conduct of the people.

If an over scrupulous conscience should prevent the people from expressing their sentiments in this manner, there is no method left, until an opportunity offers of chusing honest deputies, in which the voice of the lowest classes can be heard, in order

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to obtain the appeal of an oppressive law.

Governors will never be awed by the voice of the people, so long as it is a mere voice, without overt-acts. > The consequence of these seemingly moderate maxims is, that a door will be left open to all kinds of oppression, without any resource or redress, till the public wrongs be accumulated to the degree above mentioned, when all the world would justify the utter subversion of the government. X These maxims, therefore, admit of no remedy but the last, and most hazardous of all. But is not even a mob a less evil than a rebellion, and ought the former to be so severely blamed by writers on this subject, when it may prevent the latter? Of two evils of any kind, political as well as others, it is the dictate of common sense to chuse the less. Besides, according to common notions, avowed by
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by writers upon morals on less general principles, and by lawyers too, all penal laws give a man an alternative, either to abstain from the action prohibited, or to take the penalty.

F 2

PART

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BY WILLIAM LLOYD GOSSET, ESQ.

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PART II.

O F

CIVIL LIBERTY.

SECT I.

Of the nature of Civil Liberty in general.

IT is a matter of the greatest
I importance, that we carefully
distinguish between the *form*,
and the *extent of power* in a
government ; for many maxims in po-
litics depend upon the one, which are
too generally ascribed to the other.

It is comparatively of small consequence *who*, or *how many* be our governors, or *how long* their office continues, provided their power be the same while they are in office, and the administration be uniform and certain. All the difference which can arise to states from diversities, in the number or duration of governors, can only flow from the motives and opportunities, which those different circumstances may give their deputies, of extending, or making a bad use of their power. But whether a people enjoy more or fewer of their natural rights, under any form of government, is a matter of the last importance; and upon this depends, what, I should chuse to call the *civil liberty* of the state, as distinct from its political liberty.

If the power of government be very extensive, and the subjects of it have,
consequently

consequently, little power over their own actions, that government is tyrannical, and oppressive; whether, with respect to its form, it be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or even a republic. For the government of the temporary magistrates of a democracy, or even the laws themselves may be as tyrannical as the maxims of the most despotic monarchy, and the administration of the government may be as destructive of private happiness. The only consolation that a democracy suggests in those circumstances is, that every member of the state has a chance of arriving at a share in the chief magistracy, and consequently of playing the tyrant in his turn; and as there is no government in the world so perfectly democratical, as that every member of the state, without exception, has a right of being admitted into the administration, great numbers will be in the same condition as if they had lived under the most absolute

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solute monarchy ; and this is, in fact, almost universally the case with the poor in all governments.

For the same reason, if there were no fixed laws, but every thing was decided according to the will of the persons in power ; who is there that would think it of much consequence, whether his life, his liberty, or his property were at the mercy of one, of a few, or of a great number of people, that is, of a mob, liable to the worst of influences. So far, therefore, we may safely say, with Mr. Pope, that *those governments which are best administered are best* :—that is, provided the power of government be moderate, and leave a man the most valuable of his private rights ; provided the laws be certainly known to every one, and the administration of them be uniform, it is of no consequence how many, or how few persons are employed in the administration.

stration. But it must be allowed, that there is not the same chance for the continuance of such laws, and of such an administration, whether the power be lodged in few, or in more hands.

The governments now subsisting in Europe differ widely in their forms; but it is certain, that the present happiness of the subjects of them can by no means be estimated by a regard to the form, but that it depends chiefly upon the power, the extent, and the maxims of government, respecting personal security, private property, &c. and on the certainty and uniformity of the administration.

Civil liberty has been greatly impaired by an abuse of the maxim, that the joint understanding of all the members of a state, properly collected, must be preferable to that of individuals; and consequently that the more the
cases

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cases are, in which mankind are governed by this united reason of the whole community, so much the better ; whereas, in truth, the greater part of human actions are of such a nature, that more inconveniences would follow from their being fixed by laws, than from their being left to every man's arbitrary will.

Political and civil liberty, as before explained, though very different, have, however, a very near and manifest connection ; and the former is the chief guard of the latter, and on that account, principally, is valuable, and worth contending for. If all the political power of this country were lodged in the hands of one person, and the government thereby changed into an absolute monarchy, the people would find no difference, provided the same laws and the same administration, which now subsist, were continued.

But

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But then, the people, having no political liberty, would have no security for the continuance of the same laws, and the same administration. They would have no guard for their civil liberty. The monarch, having it in his option, might not chuse to continue the same laws, and the same administration. He might fancy it to be for his own interest to alter them, and to abridge his subjects in their private rights ; and in general, it may be depended upon, that governors will not consult the interest of the people, except it be their own interest too, because governors are but men. But while a number of the people have a share in the legislature, so as to be able to control the supreme magistrate, there is a great probability that things will continue in a good state. For the more political liberty the people have, the safer is their civil liberty.

Besides,

Besides, political and civil liberty have many things in common, which indeed, is the reason why they have been so often confounded. A sense both of political and civil slavery makes a man think meanly of himself. The feeling of his insignificance debases his mind, checks every great and enterprising sentiment ; and, in fact, renders him that poor abject creature, which he fancies himself to be. Having always some unknown evil to fear, tho' it should never come, he has no perfect enjoyment of himself, or of any of the blessings of life ; and thus, his sentiments and his enjoyments being of a lower kind, the man sinks nearer to the state of the brute creation.

On the other hand, a sense of political and civil liberty, though there should be no great occasion to exert it in the course of a man's life, gives him
a constant

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a constant feeling of his own power and importance ; and is the foundation of his indulging a free, bold, and manly turn of thinking, unrestrained by the most distant idea of control. Being free from all fear, he has the most perfect enjoyment of himself, and of all the blessings of life ; and his sentiments and enjoyments, being raised, his very *being* is exalted, and the man makes nearer approaches to superior natures.

The history of all antient and modern nations confirms these remarks. “ In
“ travelling through Germany,” says Lady M. W. Montague, “ it is im-
“ possible not to observe the difference
“ between the free towns, and those
“ under the government of absolute
“ princes, as all the little sovereigns of
“ Germany are. In the first there ap-
“ pears an air of commerce and plen-
“ ty, the streets are well built, and
“ full of people, the shops are loaded

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“ with

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“ with merchandize, and the common-
 “ alty are clean and chearful. In the
 “ other, you see a sort of shabby fine-
 “ ry, a number of people of quality
 “ tawdried out, narrow nasty streets,
 “ out of repair, wretchedly thin of in-
 “ habitants, and above half of the com-
 “ mon people asking alms.” Lady
 M. W. Montague’s Letters, vol. I.
 page 16.

“ Every house in Turkey,” the same
 “ excellent writer observes, “ at the
 “ death of its master, is at the grand
 “ seignor’s disposal ; and therefore no
 “ man cares to make a great expence,
 “ which he is not sure his family will
 “ be the better for. All their design
 “ is to build a house commodious, and
 “ that will last their lives, and they
 “ are very indifferent if it falls down
 “ the next year.” *Ib.* p. 70.

“ The

“ The fear of the laws,” says the admirable author of the Essay on crimes and punishments, “ is salutary, but the
 “ fear of man is a fruitful and fatal
 “ source of crimes. Men enslaved are
 “ more voluptuous, more debauched,
 “ and more cruel than those who are
 “ in a state of freedom. These study
 “ the sciences, and the interest of nations.
 “ They have great objects before their eyes, and imitate them.
 “ But those whose views are confined
 “ to the present moment, endeavour,
 “ amidst the distraction of riot and debauchery, to forget their situation.
 “ Accustomed to the uncertainty of all
 “ events, the consequences of their
 “ crimes become problematical; which
 “ gives an additional force to the
 “ strength of their passions.” Essay on crimes and punishments, page 166.

The proper extent of civil government, at the same time that it is a thing of the greatest consequence, is, nevertheless, not easy to be circumscribed within narrow limits ; because mankind are not agreed with respect to one particular circumstance, respecting the proper object of civil government, which must be previously fixed. That the happiness of the whole community is the ultimate end of government can never be doubted, and all claims of individuals inconsistent with the public good are absolutely null and void ; but there is a real difficulty in determining what general rules, respecting the extent of the power of government, or of governors, are most conducive to the public good.

Some may think it best, that the legislature should make express provision for every thing which can even indirectly

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rectly, remotely, and consequentially, affect the public good ; while others may think it best, that every thing, which is not properly of a civil nature, should be entirely overlooked by the civil magistrate ; that it is for the advantage of the society, upon the whole, that all those things be left to take their own natural course, and that the legislature cannot interfere in them, without defeating its own great object, the public good.

We are so little capable of arguing *a priori* in matters of government, that it should seem, experiments only can determine how far this power of the legislature ought to extend, and it should likewise seem, that, till a sufficient number of experiments have been made, it becomes the wisdom of the civil magistracy to take as little upon its hands as possible, and never to interfere, without the greatest caution, in things that

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do not immediately affect the lives, liberty, or property of the members of the community; that civil magistrates should hardly ever be moved to exert themselves by the mere *tendencies of things*, those tendencies are generally so vague, and often so imaginary; and that nothing but a manifest and urgent necessity (of which, however, themselves are, to be sure, the only judges) can justify them in extending their authority to whatever has no more than a tendency, though the strongest possible, to disturb the tranquillity and happiness of the state.

There is, with me, no doubt, but that any people, forming themselves into a society, may subject themselves to whatever restrictions they please; and consequently, that the supreme civil magistrates, on whom the whole power of the society is devolved, may make what laws they please; but the question

question is, what restrictions and laws are wise, and calculated to promote the public good ; for such only are just, right, and, properly speaking, lawful.

S E C T. II.

In what manner an authoritative code of education would affect liberty and social happiness.

HAVING considered the nature of civil liberty in general, I shall treat of two capital branches of which it consists, in two distinct sections. These are the rights of education, and religion. On these two articles much of the happiness of human life is acknowledged to depend ; but they appear to me to be of such a nature, that the advantage we derive from them will be more effectually secured, when

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when they are conducted by individuals, than by the state ; and if this can be demonstrated, nothing more is necessary, to prove that the civil magistrate has no business to interfere with them.

This I cannot help thinking to be the shortest, and the best issue upon which we can put every thing in which the civil magistrate pretends to a right of interference. If it be probable that the business, whatever it be, will be conducted better, that is, more to the advantage of society, in his hands, than in those of individuals, the right will be allowed. In those circumstances, it is evident, that no friend to society can deny his claim. But if the nature of the thing be such that the attention of individuals, with respect to it, can be applied to more advantage than that of the magistrate ; the claim of the former must

CODE OF EDUCATION. 69

must be admitted, in preference to that of the latter.

No doubt, there are examples of both kinds. The avenging of injuries, or redressing of private wrongs, is certainly better trusted in the hands of the magistrate than in those of private persons ; but with what advantage could a magistrate interfere in a thousand particulars relating to private families, and private friendships. Now I think it is clear, that education must be ranked in the latter class, or among those things in which the civil magistrate has no right to interfere ; because he cannot do it to any good purpose. But since Dr. Brown has lately maintained the contrary in a treatise, intitled, *Thoughts on civil liberty, licentiousness, and faction*, and in an *Appendix relative to a proposed code of education*, subjoined to a *Sermon on the female character and education*. I shall in this section, reply to what he has

has advanced on this subject, and offer what has occurred to me with relation to it.

Left it should be apprehended, that I mistake the views of this writer, I shall subjoin a few extracts from the work, which contain the substance of what he has advanced on the subject of education. He asserts, 'That, the first
' and best security of civil liberty consists, in impressing the infant mind
' with such habits of thought and action, as may correspond with, and
' promote the appointments of public law.' In his appendix, he says, that,
' by a CODE OF EDUCATION, he means
' a system of principles, religious, moral, and political, whose tendency may
' be the preservation of the blessings of society, as they are enjoyed in a free
' state, to be instilled effectually into
' the infant and growing minds of the
' community,

CODE OF EDUCATION. 71

‘ community, for this great end of public happiness.’

In what manner the security of civil liberty is to be effected by means of this code of education, may be seen in the following description he gives of the institutions of Sparta. ‘ No father had a right to educate his children according to the caprice of his own fancy. They were delivered to public officers, who initiated them early in the manners, the maxims, the exercises, the toils; in a word, in all the mental and bodily acquirements and habits which corresponded with the genius of the state. Family connections had no place. The first and leading object of their affection was the general welfare. This tuition was carefully continued till they were enrolled in the list of men.’

With

With respect to the Athenian government, he says, page 62, ‘ The first and
 ‘ ruling defect in the institution of this
 ‘ republic seems to have been the total
 ‘ want of an established education, suitable
 ‘ to the genius of the state. There
 ‘ appears not to have been any public,
 ‘ regular, or prescribed appointment of
 ‘ this kind, beyond what custom had
 ‘ accidentally introduced.’

He says, page 70, ‘ There were
 ‘ three fatal circumstances admitted into
 ‘ the very essence of the Roman republic,
 ‘ which contained the seeds of certain
 ‘ ruin ; the first of which was, the
 ‘ neglect of instituting public laws, by
 ‘ which the education of their children
 ‘ might have been ascertained.’

He complains, page 83, ‘ that the
 ‘ British system of policy and religion
 ‘ is not upheld in its native power like
 ‘ that

CODE OF EDUCATION. 73

‘ that of Sparta, by correspondent and
‘ effectual rules of education ; that it is
‘ in the power of every private man to
‘ educate his child, not only without a
‘ reverence for these, but in absolute
‘ contempt of them ; that, at the re-
‘ volution, page 90, the education of
‘ youth was still left in an imperfect
‘ state ; this great revolution having
‘ confined itself to the reform of public
‘ institutions, without ascending to the
‘ great fountain of political security, the
‘ private and effectual formation of the
‘ infant mind ; and, page 107, that
‘ education was afterwards left still
‘ more and more imperfect.’

Lastly, he asserts, page 156, ‘ that
‘ the chief and essential remedy of li-
‘ centiousness and faction, the funda-
‘ mental means of the lasting and se-
‘ cure establishment of civil liberty,
‘ can only be in a general and prescri-
‘ bed improvement of the laws of edu-
‘ cation,

H

' cation, to which all the members of
 ' the community should legally submit ;
 ' and that for want of a prescribed code
 ' of education, the manners and prin-
 ' ciples, on which alone the state can
 ' rest, are ineffectually instilled, are
 ' vague, fluctuating and self-contradic-
 ' tory. Nothing,' he says, ' is more
 ' evident, than that some reform in this
 ' great point is necessary for the securi-
 ' ty of public freedom ; and that tho'
 ' it is an incurable defect of our politi-
 ' cal state, that it has not a correspon-
 ' dent and adequate code of education
 ' inwrought into its first essence ; we
 ' may yet hope, that, in a secondary
 ' and inferior degree, something of this
 ' kind may still be inlaid ; that, though
 ' it cannot have that perfect efficacy,
 ' as if it had been originally of the
 ' piece, yet, if well conducted, it may
 ' strengthen the weak parts, and alle-
 ' viate defects, if not completely re-
 ' move them.'

In

In conducting my examination of these sentiments, I shall make no remarks upon any particular passages in the book, but consider only the author's general scheme, and the proper and professed object of it. And as the doctor has proposed no particular plan of public education, I shall be as general as he has been, and only shew the inconvenience of establishing, by law, any plan of education whatever.

This writer pleads for a plan of education established by the legislature, as the only effectual method of preventing faction in the state, and securing the perpetuity of our excellent constitution, ecclesiastical and civil. I agree with him, in acknowledging the importance of education, as influencing the manners and the conduct of men. I also acknowledge, that an uniform plan of education, agreeable to the principles

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of any particular form of government, civil or ecclesiastical, would tend to establish and perpetuate that form of government, and prevent civil dissensions and factions in the state. But I should object to the interference of the legislature in this business of education, as prejudicial to the proper design of education, and also to the great ends of civil societies with respect to their present utility. I shall moreover show, that it would be absolutely inconsistent with the true principles of the English government, and could not be carried into execution, to any purpose, without the ruin of our present constitution. I beg the candour of the public, while I endeavour to explain, in as few words as possible, in what manner, I apprehend, this interference of the civil magistrate would operate to obstruct these great ends. I shall consider these articles separately.

I observed

CODE OF EDUCATION. 77

I observed in the first place, that I apprehended a legal code of education might interfere with the proper design of education. I do not mean what this writer seems to consider as the only object of education, the tranquillity of the state, but the forming of wise and virtuous men ; which is certainly an object of the greatest importance in every state. If the constitution of a state be a good one, such men will be the greatest bulwarks of it ; if it be a bad one, they will be the most able and ready to contribute to its reformation ; in either of which cases they will render it the greatest service.

Education is as much an art (founded, as all arts are, upon science) as husbandry, as architecture, or as ship-building. In all these cases we have a practical problem proposed to us, which must be performed by the help

of *data* with which experience and observation furnish us. The end of ship-building is to make the best ships, of architecture the best houses, and of education, the best men. Now, of all arts, those stand the fairest chance of being brought to perfection, in which there is opportunity of making the most experiments and trials, and in which there are the greatest number and variety of persons employed in making them. History and experience show, that, *cæteris paribus*, those arts have always, in fact, been brought the soonest, or the nearest to perfection, which have been placed in those favourable circumstances. The reason is, that the operations of the human mind are slow ; a number of false hypotheses and conclusions always precede the right one ; and in every art, manual or liberal, a number of awkward attempts are made, before we are able to execute any thing which
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will bear to be shown as a master-piece in the art ; so that to establish the methods and processes of any art, before it have arrived to a state of perfection (of which no man can be a judge) is to fix it in its infancy, to perpetuate every thing that is inconvenient and awkward in it, and to cut off its future growth and improvement. And to establish the methods and processes of any art when it has arrived to perfection is superfluous. It will then recommend and establish itself.

Now I appeal to any person whether any plan of education, which has yet been put in execution in this kingdom, be so perfect as that the establishing of it by authority would not obstruct the great ends of education ; or even whether the united genius of man could, at present, form so perfect a plan. Every man who is experienced in the business of education well knows,
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that the art is in its infancy; but advancing, it is hoped, apace to a state of manhood. In this condition, it requires the aid of every circumstance favourable to its natural growth, and dreads nothing so much as being confined and cramped by the unseasonable hand of power. To put it (in its present imperfect state) into the hands of the civil magistrate, in order to fix the mode of it, would be like fixing the dress of a child, and forbidding its cloaths ever to be made wider or larger.

Manufacturers and artists of several kinds already complain of the obstruction which is given to their arts, by the injudicious acts of former parliaments; and it is the object of our wisest statesmen to get these obstructions removed, by the repeal of those acts. I wish it could not be said, that the business of education is already
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under too many legal restraints. Let these be removed, and a few more fair experiments made of the different methods of conducting it, before the legislature think proper to interfere any more with it, and by that time, it is hoped, they will see no reason to interfere at all. The business would be conducted to much better purpose, even in favour of their own views, if those views were just and honourable, than it would be under any arbitrary regulations whatever.

To shew this scheme of an established method of education in a clearer point of light, let us imagine that what is now proposed had been carried into execution some centuries before this time. For no reason can be assigned for fixing any mode of education at present, which might not have been made use of, with the same appearance of reason, for fixing another approved method

method a thousand years ago. Suppose Alfred, when he founded the university of Oxford, had made it impossible, that the method of instruction used in his time should ever have been altered. Excellent as that method might have been, for the time in which it was instituted, it would now have been the worst method that is practised in the world. Suppose the number of the arts and sciences, with the manner of teaching them, had been fixed in this kingdom, before the revival of letters and of the arts, it is plain they could never have arrived at their present advanced state among us. We should not have had the honour to lead the way in the most noble discoveries, in the mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, and, I may add, divinity too. And for the same reason, were such an establishment to take place in the present age, it would prevent all great improvements in futurity.

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I may add, in this place, that, if we argue from the analogy of education to other arts which are most similar to it, we can never expect to see human nature, about which it is employed, brought to perfection, but in consequence of indulging unbounded liberty, and even caprice in conducting it. The power of nature in producing plants cannot be shown to advantage, but in all possible circumstances of culture. The richest colours, the most fragrant scents and the most exquisite flavours, which our present gardens and orchards exhibit, would never have been known, if florists and gardeners had been confined in the processes of cultivation; nay if they had not been allowed the utmost licentiousness of fancy in the exercise of their arts. Many of the finest productions of modern gardening have been the result of casual experiment, perhaps of undesigned deviation from
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established rules. Observations of a similar nature may be made on the methods of breeding cattle, and training animals of all kinds. And why should the rational part of the creation be deprived of that opportunity of diversifying and improving itself, which the vegetable and animal world enjoy?

From new, and seemingly irregular methods of education, perhaps something extraordinary and uncommonly great may spring. At least there would be a fair chance for such productions; and if something odd and excentric should, now and then, arise from this unbounded liberty of education, the various business of human life may afford proper spheres for such excentric geniuses.

Education, taken in its most extensive sense, is properly that which makes the
man.

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man. One method of education, therefore, would only produce one kind of men ; but the great excellence of human nature consists in the variety of which it is capable. Instead then of endeavouring, by uniform and fixed systems of education, to keep mankind always the same, let us give free scope to every thing which may bid fair for introducing more variety among us. The various character of the Athenians was certainly preferable to the uniform character of the Spartans, or to any uniform national character whatever.

Is it not universally considered as an advantage to England, that it contains so great a variety of original characters? And is it not, on this account, preferred to France, Spain, or Italy?

Uniformity is the characteristic of the brute creation. Among them every species of birds build their nests with the
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same materials, and in the same form; the genius and disposition of one individual is that of all; and it is only the education which men give them that raises any of them much above others. But it is the glory of human nature, that the operations of reason, though variable, and by no means infallible, are capable of infinite improvement. We come into the world worse provided than any of the brutes, and for a year or two of our lives, many of them go far beyond us in intellectual accomplishments. But when their faculties are at a full stand, and their enjoyments incapable of variety, or increase, our intellectual powers are growing apace; we are perpetually deriving happiness from new sources, and even before we leave this world are capable of tasting the felicity of angels.

Have we, then, so little sense of the proper excellence of our natures, and of the views of divine providence in
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our formation, as to catch at a poor advantage adapted to the lower nature of brutes. Rather, let us hold on in the course in which the divine being himself has put us, by giving reason its full play, and throwing off the fetters which short-sighted and ill-judging men have hung upon it. Though, in this course, we be liable to more extravagancies than brutes, governed by blind but unerring instinct, or than men whom mistaken systems of policy have made as uniform in their sentiments and conduct as the brutes, we shall be in the way to attain a degree of perfection and happiness of which they can have no idea.

However, as men are first animals before they can be properly termed rational creatures, and the analogies of individuals extend to societies, a principle something resembling the instinct of animals may, perhaps, suit mankind

in their infant state ; but then, as we advance in the arts of life, let us, as far as we are able, assert the native freedom of our souls, and, after having been servilely governed like brutes, aspire to the noble privilege of governing ourselves like men.

If it may have been necessary to establish something by law concerning education, that necessity grows less every day, and encourages us to relax the bonds of authority, rather than bind them faster.

Secondly, this scheme of an established mode of education would be prejudicial to the great ends of civil society. The great object of civil society is the happiness of the members of it, in the perfect and undisturbed enjoyment of the more important of our natural rights, for the sake of which, we voluntarily give up others of less consequence to us.

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But whatever be the blessings of civil society, they may be bought too dear. It is certainly possible to sacrifice too much, at least more than is necessary to be sacrificed for them, in order to produce the greatest sum of happiness in the community. Else why do we complain of tyrannical and oppressive governments? Is it not the meaning of all complaints of this kind, that, in such governments, the subjects are deprived of their most important natural rights, without an equivalent recompence; that all the valuable ends of civil government might be effectually secured, and the members of particular states be much happier upon the whole, if they did not lie under those restrictions.

Now, of all the sources of happiness and enjoyment in human life, the domestic relations are the most constant and copious. With our wives and chil-

dren we necessarily pass the greatest part of our lives. The connections of friendship are slight in comparison of this intimate domestic union. Views of interest or ambition may divide the nearest friends, but our wives and children are, in general, inseparably connected with us and attached to us. With them all our joys are doubled, and in their affection and assiduity we find consolation under all the troubles and disquietudes of life. For the enjoyments which result from this most delightful intercourse, all mankind, in all ages, have been ready to sacrifice every thing ; and for the interruption of this intercourse no compensation whatever can be made by man. What then can be more justly alarming to a man who has a true taste for happiness, than, either that the choice of his wife, or the education of his children should be under the direction of persons who have no particular knowledge

ledge of him, or particular affection for him, and whose views and maxims he might utterly dislike? What prospect of happiness could a man have with such a wife, or such children?

It is possible, indeed, that the preservation of some civil societies, such as that of Sparta, may require this sacrifice; but those civil societies must be wretchedly constituted to stand in need of it, and had better be utterly dissolved. Were I a member of such a state, thankful should I be to its governors, if they would permit me peaceably to retire to any other country, where so great a sacrifice was not required. Indeed, it is hardly possible that a state should require sacrifice, which I should think of so much importance. And, I doubt not, so many others would be of the same mind, that there would soon be very little reason to complain of the too great increase of commerce in such a country.

a country. This, however, would render very necessary another part of our author's scheme ; viz. putting a restraint upon travelling abroad, lest too many persons should be willing to leave such a country, and have no inclination to return.

If there be any natural rights which ought not to be sacrificed to the ends of civil society, and no politicians or moralists deny but that there are some, (the obligations of religion, for instance, being certainly of a superior nature) it is even more natural to look for these rights among those which respect a man's children, than among those which respect himself ; because nature has generally made them dearer to him than himself.

If any trust can be said to be of God, and such as ought not to be relinquished at the command of man, it is that which

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we have of the education of our children, which the divine being seems to have put under our immediate care; that we may instruct them in such principles, form them to such manners, and give them such habits of thinking and acting, as we shall judge to be of the greatest importance to their present and future well-being.

I believe there is no father in the world, (who, to a sense of religion, joins a strong sense of parental affection) who would think his own liberty above half indulged to him, when abridged in so tender a point, as that of providing, to his own satisfaction, for the good conduct and happiness of his offspring. Nature seems to have established such a strong connexion between a parent and his children, at least during the first period of their lives, that to drag them from the asylum of their natural guardians, to force them to public places of education,

education, and to instil into them religious sentiments contrary to the judgment and choice of their parents, would be as cruel, as obliging a man to make the greatest personal sacrifice, even that of his conscience, to the civil magistrate.

What part of the persecution which the protestants in France underwent did they complain of more feelingly, and with more justice, than that of their children being forced from them, and carried to be educated in public monasteries? God forbid that the parental affections of free-born Britons should ever be put to so severe a trial! or to that which the poor Jews in Portugal suffered; many of whom cut the throats of their children, or threw them into wells, and down precipices, rather than suffer them to be dragged away to be educated under the direction of a popish inquisition; thinking the lives of
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their children a less sacrifice than that of their principles.

It was a measure similar to that which Dr. Brown recommended, at which the whole christian world took the greatest alarm that was ever given to it, in the reign of that great man, but inveterate enemy of christianity, the emperor Julian ; who would have shut up the schools of christians, and have forbidden them to teach rhetoric and philosophy. Similar to this scheme, in its nature and tendency, was the most odious measure of the most odious ministry that ever sat at the helm of the British government, and which was providentially defeated the very day that it was to have been carried into execution ; I mean the SCHISM BILL, patronized by the Tory ministers in the latter end of the reign of queen Ann. Should these measures be resumed, and pursued, Farewel, a long farewell to England's greatness !

greatness ! Nor would this be said in a hasty fit of unreasonable despair. For, besides that such a measure as this could not but have many extensive consequences ; it is not to be doubted, but that whoever they be who do thus much, they both can and will do more. Such a scheme as this will never be pushed for its own sake only.

In examining the present operation and utility of any scheme of policy, we ought to take into consideration the ease or the difficulty of carrying it into execution. For if the disturbance, which would be occasioned by bringing it into execution, would be so great an inconvenience, as to overbalance the good to be effected by it, it were better never to attempt it. Now, though the doctor hath laid down no particular scheme of public and established education, and therefore we cannot judge of the particular difficulties which would attend

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tend the establishing of it ; yet, if it be such as would answer the end proposed by him, this difficulty would appear to me absolutely insuperable, in such a country as England.

Whatever be the *religious, moral, and political principles*, which are thought conducive to the good of the society, if they must be *effectually instilled into the infant and growing minds of the community*, it can never be done without taking the children very early from their parents, and cutting off all communication with them, till they be arrived to maturity and their judgments be absolutely fixed. And if this author judged, that the reason why a scheme of this nature did not take place in Athens, was the difficulty of establishing it, after the people were tolerably civilized ; he must certainly judge it to be infinitely more difficult, among a people

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so much farther advanced in the arts of life than the Athenians.

He well observes, page 53, that, “to give children a public education where no education had taken place, was natural and practicable;” but he seems to be aware, that an attempt to carry any such plan into execution, in the most flourishing period of a free and civilized state, would be highly unnatural, without the least probable hope of success, and dangerous to such as took it in hand. For he says, page 52, that, “to effect a change of government only is a work sufficient for the abilities of the greatest legislator; but to overturn all the pre-established habits of the head and heart, to destroy or reverse all the fixed associations, maxims, manners, and principles, were a labour which might well be ranked among the
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“ most extravagant legends of fabulous
“ Greece.”

What might be expected from the business of education being lodged by the state in the hands of any one set of men, may be imagined from the alarm which the Newtonian system gave to all philosophers at the time of its first publication, and from what passed at Oxford with respect to Locke's *Essay on the human understanding*, which hath done so much honour to the English nation in the eyes of all the learned World. We are told by the authors of *Biographia Britannica*, in the life of Mr. Locke, that “ there was a meeting of
“ the heads of houses at Oxford, where
“ it was proposed to censure, and discourage the reading of this Essay;
“ and that, after various debates, it was
“ concluded, that, without any public
“ censure, each head of a house should
“ endeavour to prevent its being read
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“ in his own college.” This passed but a little before Mr. Locke’s death, and about fourteen years after the first publication of the Essay.

Hitherto I have argued against established modes of education upon general principles, shewing how unfavourable they are to the great ends of civil society, with only occasional references to the English constitution ; and in these arguments I have, likewise, supposed these methods of education, whatever they be, actually established, and to have operated to their full extent. I shall now add, that, before these methods can be established, and produce their full effect, they must occasion a very considerable alteration in the English constitution, and almost inevitably destroy the freedom of it ; so that the thing which would, in fact, be perpetuated, would not be the present constitution of England, but something very

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ry different from it, and more despotic. An alteration of so great importance, which tends to defeat one of the principal objects of this government, cannot but give just cause of alarm to every friend of the present happy constitution and liberties of this country. In support of this assertion, I desire no other argument than that with which Dr. Brown himself furnishes me, from the influence he allows to education, operating, likewise, in the very manner which he describes, and to the very end for which he advises the establishing of its mode.

Education is considered by the doctor only in a political view, as useful to instil into the minds of youth particular maxims of policy, and to give them an attachment to particular forms of it; or as tending to superinduce such habits of mind, and to give such a general turn of thinking, as would corre-

spond with the genius of a particular state. This education he would have to be universal and uniform ; and indeed, if it were not so, it could not possibly answer the end proposed. It must, therefore, be conducted by one set of men. But it is impossible to find any set of men, who shall have an equal regard to all the parts of our constitution ; and whatever part is neglected in such a system of education it cannot fail to be a sufferer.

The English government is a mixture of regal, aristocratical, and democratical power ; and if the public education should be more favourable to any one of these than to another, or more than its present importance in the constitution requires, the balance of the whole would necessarily be lost. Too much weight would be thrown into some of the scales, and the constitution be overturned. If the commons,

mons, representing the body of the people, had the choice of these public instructors, which is almost impossible, we should see a republic rise out of the ruins of our present government; if the lords, which is highly improbable, we should, in the end, have an aristocracy; and if the court had this nomination, which it may be taken for granted would be the case (as all the executive power of the state is already lodged in the hands of the sovereign) it could not but occasion a very dangerous accession of power to the crown, and we might justly expect a system of education, principles, and manners favourable to despotism. Every man would be educated with principles, which would lead him to concur with the views of the court. All that opposition from the country, which is so salutary in this nation, and so essential to the liberties of England, would be at an end. And when once the spirit
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of despotism was thus established, and had triumphed over all opposition, we might soon expect to see the forms of it established too, and thereby the very doors shut against old English liberty, and effectually guarded against the possibility of its return, except by violence; which would then be the only method of its re-entrance.

It is evident to common understanding, that the true spirit and maxims of a mixed government can no otherwise be continued, than by every man's educating his children in his own way; and that if any one part provided for the education of the whole, that part would soon gain the ascendancy in the whole; and, if it were capable of it, would become the whole. Were a state, for instance, to consist of papists and protestants, and the papists had the sole power of education, protestantism would expire with that generation :

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ration : whereas, if the papists and protestants educated each their own children, the same proportion would continue to subsist between them, and the balance of power would remain the same. For the same reason the only method of preserving the balance, which at present subsists among the several political and religious parties in Great-Britain, is for each party to provide for the education of their own children.

In this way, there will be a fair prospect of things continuing nearly upon their present footing, for a considerable time ; but subject to those gradual alterations which, it may be hoped, will prove favourable to the best interests of the society upon the whole. Whereas, were the direction of the whole business of education thrown into the hands of the court, it would be such an accession of power to the regal
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part of our constitution, as could not fail to alarm all the friends of civil liberty; as all the friends of religious liberty would be justly alarmed, if it should devolve upon the established clergy. And it were the greatest injustice to the good sense of free-born Britons, to suppose the noble spirit of religious liberty, and a zeal for the rights of free inquiry confined within the narrow circle of protestant dissenters.

I doubt not, the wisest and the most worthy of the English prelates would rather see the privileges of the dissenters enlarged than abridged, in any important article; for, allowing their dissent to be ever so unreasonable, there is no man who has the least knowledge of history or of human nature, but must be sensible, that the very distinguished reputation which the body of the English clergy enjoy at present

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present is, not a little, owing to the existence and respectable figure of the protestant dissenters. Several of the most discerning of the English bishops have given their testimony, directly or indirectly, to this truth ; particularly, if I remember right, bishop Gibson, in his charges to the clergy of his dioceses. The present state of the dissenting interest can give no alarm to the established clergy with respect to their temporalities ; and, certainly, the interests of religious knowledge, which all wise and good men of every denomination have most at heart, cannot fail to be promoted by that spirit of emulation, which will always subsist betwixt scholars and writers in two opposite persuasions.

There is no power on earth, but has grown exorbitant when it has met with no control. What was the character of the Romish clergy before the reformation ?

mation ? how shamefully ignorant, imperious, lazy, and debauched were the bulk of them ! whereas very great numbers of them are now sensible, moderate, and virtuous ; and little in comparison, of the old leaven remains, except in Spain and Portugal, where the clergy have no intercourse with protestants, which might call forth an exertion of their faculties, and check the extravagance of their appetites and passions. To say that the English clergy, in future time, would not run into the vices, and sink into the contempt into which the Romish clergy were sunk before the reformation, when they were in the same circumstances, would be to say they were not men.

It is Puffendorf, I think, who accounts for the great superiority of the English clergy over the Swedish upon this principle. In Sweden, though it be a protestant country, no dissenters

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are allowed ; and their clergy have never produced any thing, in ethics or divinity, which deserves notice. Whoever made the observation, there is no doubt of the fact.

A few narrow-minded, and short-sighted bigots, among the inferior clergy, may wish the extinction of the dissenting interest, and might be ready to gratify their hatred and blind zeal, by persecuting those of their brethren whose consciences are, unhappily, a little more tender than their own ; but, certainly, there would not be wanting, in this age, men enow of more humanity, of juster sentiments, and of more enlarged views, among the higher ranks in the church, who would, with indignation, snatch the torch from their misguided hands. Their low talents were better confined to a narrower sphere, in which the fire of their little souls might very

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harmlessly vent itself in occasional declamatory invectives ; which would only serve to shew the malignity of their own tempers, or the meanness and impotence of bigotry, and make all men of sense more in love with the true principles of christian moderation. The indelible infamy which would, to the latest posterity, pursue the man, who should form, countenance, or even connive at, persecuting measures, in this age of moderation and good sense, will effectually deter men of understanding, and of a just knowledge of the world from these measures ; and it is hoped, that men of zeal without knowledge will want abilities and influence to carry such schemes into execution.

No nation ever was, or can be truly great, powerful, and happy by pursuing oppressive and persecuting measures. And a sovereign, who has a
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true sense of his present and future glory, must see it can only arise from his being the head of a great, powerful, and happy nation, made, or continued so, by himself. His best friends are those who would raise his greatness, by augmenting the greatness of the people over whom he presides. He himself must see the absurdity of every scheme which proposes to raise his character at the expence of that of his country; as if it were possible to depress the people to the condition of slaves, without sinking the sovereign into a master of such slaves. Poor pre-eminence! such maxims may have influence with Asiatic monarchs, but can never impose on a sovereign of Great-Britain, educated in British principles, and with a just regard to the privileges of his subjects, with which his own true dignity is inseparably connected.

The nation will execrate, and the discerning prince will see through, and detest the meanness of that adulation, which, however disguised, would tend to enslave the kingdom, and debase the king. The meanest tool of the meanest party may exclaim against licentiousness and faction; men of genius, learning, and integrity may, through the force of prejudice, be induced to join in the cry; and courtiers may think to recommend themselves to a sovereign by any measures which tend to quiet the clamours of the people; but the true enemy of sedition, and he who most effectually pays his court to a wise and good prince, is the man, who, without any views of preferment, proposes, with a manly freedom, whatever he thinks conducive to the greatness and glory of his country. This conduct cannot fail, both to give satisfaction to his
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fellow citizens, and ensure him the esteem of his prince : because such measures will proportionably raise the lustre of all ranks of men in the state, will make a wise prince the idol of a grateful nation, and endear his memory to the latest posterity.

Considering the whole of what hath been advanced in this section, I think it sufficiently appears, that education is a branch of civil liberty, which ought by no means to be surrendered into the hands of the civil magistrate, and that the best interests of society require, that the right of conducting it should be inviolably preserved to individuals.

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S E C T. III.

Of Religious Liberty and Toleration.

TH E most important question concerning the extent of civil government is, whether the civil magistrate ought to extend his authority to matters of *religion*; and the only method of deciding this important question, as it appears to me, is to have recourse at once to first principles, and the ultimate rule concerning every thing that respects a society; viz. whether such interference of the civil magistrate appear, from reason, or from fact, to be for the public good. And as all arguments *a priori* in matters
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AND TOLERATION. 115

of policy are apt to be fallacious, fact and experience seem to be our only safe guide. Now these, as far as our knowledge of history extends, declare clearly for no interference in this case at all, or at least for as little as is possible. Those societies have ever enjoyed the most happiness, and have been, *ceteris paribus*, in the most flourishing state, where the civil magistrates have meddled the least with religion, and where they have the most closely confined their attention to what immediately affects the civil interests of their fellow citizens.

Civil and religious matters (taking the words in their usual acceptation) seem to be so distinct, that it can only be in very uncommon emergencies, where, for instance, religious quarrels among the members of the state rise very high, that the civil magistrate can have any call, or pretence, for interfering

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fering with religion. We know that infinite mischiefs have arisen from this interference ; and we have yet seen no inconvenience to have arisen from the want, or the relaxation of it.

The fine country of Flanders, the most flourishing and opulent then in Europe, was absolutely ruined, past recovery, by the mad attempt of Philip the second, to introduce the popish inquisition into that country. France was greatly hurt by the revocation of the edict of Nantz ; whereas England was a great gainer on both occasions, by granting an asylum for those persecuted industrious people ; who repaid us for our kindness, by the introduction of many useful arts and manufactures, which were the foundation of our present commerce, riches, and power.

Pensylvania

Penſylvania flouriſhed much more than New-England, or than any other of the Engliſh ſettlements in North America, evidently in conſequence of giving more liberty in matters of religion, at its firſt eſtabliſhment. Holland has found its advantage in the indulgence ſhe gives to a great variety of religious perſuaſions. England has alſo been much more flouriſhing and happy, ſince the eſtabliſhment, as it may properly enough be ſtiled, of the diſſenting method of worſhip, by what is commonly called the *act of toleration*. And all the ſenſible part of Europe concur in thinking, both that the Poſiſh diſſidents have a right to all the privileges of other Poſiſh citizens; and that, is much happier for that country that their claims are admitted: and none but intereſted bigots oppoſed their demands.

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If we look a little farther off from home, let it be said, what inconvenience did Jenghis khan, Tamerlane, and other eastern conquerors ever find from leaving religion to its natural course in the countries they subdued, and from having christians, mahometans, and a variety of pagans under the same form of civil government? Are not both christianity and mohammedanism, in fact, established (the former at least fully tolerated) in Turkey; and what inconvenience, worth mentioning, has ever arisen from it?

Pity it is then, that more and fairer experiments are not made; when, judging from what is past, the consequences of *unbounded liberty, in matters of religion*, promise to be so very favourable to the best interests of mankind.

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I am aware, that the connexion between civil and religious affairs, will be urged for the necessity of some interference of the legislature with religion ; and I do not deny the connection. But as this connection has always been found to be the greatest in barbarous nations, and imperfect governments, to which it lends an useful aid ; it may be presumed, that the connection is gradually growing less necessary ; and that, in the present advanced state of human society, there is very little occasion for it. For my own part, I have no apprehension, but that, at this day, the laws might be obeyed very well without any ecclesiastical sanctions, enforced by the civil magistrate.

Not that I think religion will ever be a matter of indifference in civil society : that is impossible, if the word be understood

derstood in its greatest latitude, and by religion we mean that principle whereby men are influenced by the dread of evil, or the hope of reward from any unknown and invisible causes, whether the good or evil be expected to take place in this world or another, comprehending enthusiasm, superstition, and every species of false religion, as well as the true. Nor is such an event at all desirable; nay, the more just motives men have to the same good actions, the better; but religious motives may still operate in favour of the civil laws, without such a connection as has been formed between them in ecclesiastical establishments; and, I think, this end would be answered even better without that connection.

In all the modes of religion, which subsist among mankind, however sub-
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versive of virtue they may be in theory, there is some *salvo* for good morals; so that, in fact, they enforce the more essential parts, at least, of that conduct, which the good order of society requires. Besides, it might be expected, that if all the modes of religion were equally protected by the civil magistrate, they would all vie with one another, which should best deserve that protection. This, however, is, in fact, all the alliance that can take place between religion and civil policy, each enforcing the same conduct by different motives. Any other *alliance between church and state* is only the alliance of different sorts of worldly minded men, for their temporal emolument.

If I be urged with the horrid excesses of the anabaptists in Germany, about the time of the reformation; of the Levellers in England, during
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the civil wars ; and the shocking practices of that people in Asia, from whom we borrow the term *assassin* ; I answer, that, besides its being absolutely chimerical to apprehend any such extravagancies at present, and that they can never subsist long ; such outrages as these, against the peace of society, may be restrained by the civil magistrate, without his troubling himself about religious opinions. If a man commit murder, let him be punished as a murderer, and let no regard be paid to his plea of conscience for committing the action ; but let not the opinions, which lead to the action be meddled with : for then, it is probable, that more harm will be done than good, and, that for a small evident advantage, risque will be run of endless and unknown evils ; or if the civil magistrate never interfere in religion but in such cases as those before mentioned, the friends of liberty will have

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have no great reason to complain. Considering what great encroachments have been made upon their rights in several countries of Europe, they will be satisfied if *part of the load* be removed. They will support themselves with the hope, that, as the state will certainly find a solid advantage in every relaxation of its claim upon men's consciences, it will relax more and more of its pretended rights ; till, at last, religious opinions, and religious actions, be as free as the air we breathe, or the light of the common sun.

Ecclesiastical authority may have been necessary in the infant state of society ; and, for the same reason, it may, perhaps, continue to be, in some degree, necessary as long as society is imperfect ; and therefore may not be entirely abolished, till civil government have arrived at a much greater degree of perfection.

If, therefore, I were asked, whether I should approve of the immediate dissolution of all the ecclesiastical establishments in Europe, I should answer, no. This might, possibly, especially in some countries, for reasons that cannot be foreseen, be too hazardous an experiment. To begin with due caution, let experiments be first made of *alterations*; or, which is the same thing, of *better establishments* than the present. Let them be reformed in many essential articles, and then not thrown aside entirely, till it be found by experience, that ~~do~~ good can be made of them. If I be asked in what particulars I imagine them to be most deficient, and what *kind* of reformation I could wish to have made in them; I answer, I could wish they were reformed in the four following respects, which are all of a capital nature, and in which almost all our present

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sent establishments are fundamentally wrong ; as I make no doubt will appear to every man, of common sense, who shall give the least attention to this subject.

1. Let the articles of faith, to be subscribed by candidates for the ministry, be greatly reduced. In the formulary of the church of England, might not thirty-eight out of the thirty-nine be very well spared ? It is a reproach to any christian establishment, if every man cannot claim the benefit of it, who can say, that he believes in the religion of *Jesus Christ*, as it is set forth in the *New Testament*. You say the terms are so general, that even deists would quibble, and insinuate themselves. I answer, that all the articles which are subscribed at present, by no means exclude deists who will prevaricate ; and upon this scheme you would at least exclude fewer honest men.

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But all temptation to prevaricate will be taken away if the next article of reformation be attended to.

2. Let the livings of the clergy be made more equal, in proportion to the duty required of each: and when the stipend is settled, let not the importance of the office be estimated above its real value. Let nothing be considered but the work, and the necessary expences of a liberal education.

3. Let the clergy be confined to their ecclesiastical duty, and have nothing to do in conducting affairs of state. Is not their presence in the cabinet rather dangerous? The seat of our bishops in parliament is a relick of the popish usurpations over the temporal rights of the sovereigns of Europe; and is not every thing of this nature justly considered as a great absurdity in modern government? The question,

question, by what right they sit, need not be discussed. As teachers of the religion of Christ, whose kingdom was not of this world, can they have any business to meddle with civil government? However, if they be allowed to sit in the great council of the nation, as members of the community at large; suppose they were fairly elected like other members; but should such a civil power as they now have devolve upon them, as a matter of course, on any pretence whatever?

4. Let the system of *toleration* be completely carried into execution: and let every member of the community enjoy every right of a citizen, whether he chuse to conform to the established religion or not. Let every man, who has sufficient abilities, be deemed qualified to serve his country in any civil capacity. Because a man cannot be a bishop, must he therefore be nothing in

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in the state, and his country derive no benefit from his talents? Besides, let it be considered, that those who depart the farthest from established opinions will have more at stake in a country where they enjoy these singular privileges; and, consequently will be more attached to it.

The toleration in England, notwithstanding our boasted liberty, is far from being complete. Our present laws do not tolerate those more rational dissenters, whom the bishop of Gloucester looks upon as brethren. It is known to every body, that if the toleration act was strictly put in execution, it would silence all these dissenting ministers who are held in any degree of esteem by the church; in the same manner as a truly conscientious subscription to the thirty-nine articles would silence almost all that are rational, and free from enthusiasm, among

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mong themselves. It is not the law, but the mildness of the administration, and the spirit of the times to which we are indebted for our present liberties. But the man who should attempt to abuse the letter of the law, contrary to the spirit of the times, and in order to trample upon the sacred rights of humanity, will ever be infamous.

It will be said, that a regard to liberty itself must plead for one exception to the principles of toleration. The papists, it is alledged, are such determined enemies to liberty, civil and ecclesiastical, and so effectually alienated from the interests of a protestant country and government, that protestants, who have a regard for their own safety, and the great cause in which they are engaged, cannot tolerate them. If they do it, it is at their own peril ; so that the persecution

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cution of papists is, in fact, nothing more than a dictate of self-preservation.

This plea, I own, is plausible ; and two centuries ago it is no wonder it had considerable weight ; but persecution by *protestants*, in this enlightened age, appears so utterly repugnant to the great principle of their cause, that I wish they would view it in every point of light, before they seriously adopt any such measure. And I cannot help thinking, that the result of a more mature consideration of this subject will not be to *render evil for evil* to our old mother church, but rather a more indulgent treatment than we have as yet vouchsafed to afford her.

In the first place, I cannot imagine that the increase of popery, in these kingdoms, will ever be so considerable,

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ble, as to give any just alarm to the friends of liberty. All the address and assiduity of man cannot, certainly, recommend so absurd a system of faith and practice to any but the lowest and most illiterate of our common people, who can never have any degree of influence in the state. The number of popish gentry must grow less ; partly through the influence of fashion, and partly through the conviction of those who may have a liberal education, which will necessarily throw protestant books into their hands.

If the popish priests and missionaries have the success which it is pretended they have, I am almost persuaded, that the most effectual arguments they have employed for this purpose, have been drawn from the rigour of our present laws respecting the papists. They tell the people, that, conscious
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of the weakness of our cause, we dare not give them full liberty to teach and exercise their religion ; knowing that the excellency of it is such, that, if it were publicly exhibited, it would attract universal admiration ; and that what we are not able to silence by argument, we suppress by force.

Besides, the traces and remains of popery are so striking in the book of common prayer, and in the whole system of our ecclesiastical establishment, that the derivation of it from the popish system cannot be concealed ; and hence it may not be difficult for an artful papist, to persuade many of the common people to quit the shadow, and have recourse to the substance ; to abandon the interests of an apostate child, and adopt that of its ancient and venerable parent.

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Let the church of England then, before it be too late, make a farther reformation from popery, and leave fewer of the symbols of the Romish church about her : and the ideas of her members being more remote from every thing that has any connection with popery, the popish missionaries will have much more difficulty in making them comprehend and relish it. A convert to popery from any of the sects of protestant dissenters (who are farther removed from the popish system than the church of England) was, I believe, never heard of. And this effect is not owing to any particular care of their ministers to guard their hearers against popery ; but because the whole system of their faith and practice is so contrary to it, that even the common people, among them, N would

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would as soon turn mahometans, or pagans, as become papists.

Instead, then, of using more rigour with the papists, let us allow them a full toleration. We should, at least, by this means, be better judges of their number, and encrease. And I also think they would be much less formidable in these circumstances, than they are at present. If they be enemies, an open enemy is less dangerous than a secret one. And if our ecclesiastical establishment must not be reformed; and removed farther from popery; let the clergy, as the best *succedaneum* for such an effectual antidote against their poison, show more zeal in the discharge of their parochial duties, and give more attention to their flocks. Half the zeal which the papists employ, to make converts, would be more than sufficient

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sufficient to prevent any from being made : and whose business is it to counteract the endeavours of the popish emissaries, but those whom the state has appointed the guardians of the people in spiritual matters ? And what is their calling in the aid of the civil power, but an acknowledgement of a neglect of their proper duty ?

It may be said, that the particular situation of this country should be a motive with all the friends of our happy constitution, to keep a watchful eye over the papists ; since a popish religion may, at length, fix a popish pretender upon the throne of these kingdoms. Seriously as this argument for persecution might have been urged formerly, I cannot help thinking that, ever since the last rebellion, the apprehension on which it is grounded,

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is become absolutely chimerical, and therefore that it does not deserve a serious answer ; so that the pretence will now be considered to be as poor, as the cause it is designed to subserve is bad. After the pope himself has refused to acknowledge the heir of the Stuart family to be king of England, what can a papist, as such, have to plead for him ? And, for my own part, I make no doubt, there are men of good sense among the popish gentry, at least, and persons of property of that persuasion, as well as among persons of other religious professions ; and therefore, that if they laid under fewer civil disadvantages, they would not only chearfully acquiesce in, but would become zealously attached to our excellent form of *free government* ; and that, upon any emergency, they would bravely stand up for it, protestant

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as it is, in opposition to any popish system of *arbitrary power* whatever.

Besides, when a popish country is at this very time, showing us an example of a toleration, more perfect, in several respects, than any which the church of England allows to those who dissent from her, is it not time to advance a little farther? Political considerations may justly be allowed to have some weight in this case, France may reasonably be expected to follow, and improve upon the example of Poland; and if we do not make some speedy improvement of liberty, that great and indefatigable rival power, by one master stroke of policy, may almost depopulate this great and flourishing kingdom.

We often hear it said, that if France grows wise, and admits of tolera-

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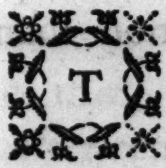
tion, England is undone. Novelty, and a milder climate, will, no doubt, attract multitudes; and whenever the French make a reformation, as their minds are much more enlightened, than those of the English reformers were, when our present establishment was fixed, their reformation will, in all probability, be much more perfect than ours. And if the French through our folly, and the ambition, avarice, or baseness of some spiritual dignitaries, should be permitted to take the lead in this noble work, and our emulation be not roused by their example, the future motto of England may, with too much propriety, be taken from Bacon's speaking statue, **TIME IS PAST.**

PART



PART III.

Of the Progress of Civil Societies to a State of greater Perfection, showing that it is retarded by Encroachments on Civil and Religious Liberty.

 **T**HE great argument in favour of the perpetuation of ecclesiastical establishments is, that, as they suit the several forms of civil government under which they have taken place, the one cannot be touched without endangering the other. I am not insensible of the truth there

there is in the principle on which this apprehension is grounded ; but I think the connection, artfully as those things have been interwoven, is not so strict, but that they may be separated, at least, in a course of time. But allowing that some change might take place in our civil constitution, in consequence of the abolition or reformation of the ecclesiastical part, it is more than an equal chance, that the alteration will be for the better ; and no real friend to his country can wish to perpetuate its present constitution in church or state, so far as to interrupt its progress to greater perfection than it has yet attained to.

I can heartily join with the greatest admirers of the English constitution, in their encomiums upon it, when it is compared with that of any other country in the world. I really think

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it to be the best actual scheme of civil policy ; but if any person should say, that it is perfect, and that no alteration can be made in it for the better, I beg leave to withhold my assent. Dr. Brown himself doth not hesitate to acknowledge, that there are imperfections in it. How then can a real friend to his country wish to fix its imperfections upon it, and make them perpetual ?

It will be said, that alterations may, indeed, be made, but cannot be made with safety, and without the danger of throwing every thing into confusion ; so that, upon the whole, things had better remain as they are : but, allowing this, for the present, why should they be perpetuated as they are ? If the proposed alterations were violent ones, that is, introduced by violent measures, they might justly give alarm
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to all good citizens. I would endeavour to stop the ablest hand that should attempt to reform in this manner; because it is hardly possible but that a remedy so effected must be worse than the disease. But still, why should we object to any state's gradually reforming itself, or throw obstacles in the way of such reformation.

All civil societies, and the whole science of civil government on which they are founded, are yet in their infancy. Like other arts and sciences, this is gradually improving; but it improves more slowly, because opportunities for making experiments are fewer. Indeed, hardly any trials in legislation have ever been made by persons who had knowledge and ability to collect from history, and to compare the observations which might be

be of use for this purpose, or had leisure to digest them properly at the time. Taking it for granted, therefore, that our constitution and laws have not escaped the imperfections which we see to be incident to every thing human ; by all means, let the closest attention be given to them, let their excellencies and defects be thoroughly laid open, and let improvements of every kind be made ; but not such as would prevent all further improvements : because it is not probable, that any improvements, which the utmost sagacity of man could now suggest, would be an equivalent for the prevention of all that might be made hereafter. Were the best formed state in the world to be fixed in its present condition, I make no doubt but that, in a course of time, it would be the worst.

History

History demonstrates this truth with respect to all the celebrated states of antiquity ; and as all things (and particularly whatever depends upon science) have of late years been in a quicker progress towards perfection than ever ; we may safely conclude the same with respect to any political state now in being. What advantage did Sparta (the constitution of whose government was so much admired by the ancients, and many moderns) reap from those institutions which contributed to its longevity, but the longer continuance of, what I should not scruple to call, the worst government we read of in the world ; a government which secured to a man the fewest of his natural rights, and of which a man who had a taste for life would least of all chuse to be a member. While the arts of life were improving in all the neighbouring

neighbouring nations, Sparta derived this noble prerogative from her constitution, that she continued the nearest to her pristine barbarity; and in the space of near a thousand years, (which includes the whole period in which letters and the arts were the most cultivated in the rest of Greece) produced no one poet, orator, historian, or artist of any kind. The convulsions of Athens, where life was in some measure enjoyed, and the faculties of body and mind had their proper exercise and gratification, were, in my opinion, far preferable to the savage uniformity of Sparta.

The constitution of Egypt was similar to that of Sparta, and the advantages that country received from it were similar. Egypt was the mother of the arts to the states of Greece; but the rigid institutions of this mother of the

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arts kept them in their infancy ; so that the states of Greece, being more favourably situated for improvements of all kinds, soon went beyond their instructers ; while no improvements of any kind were ever made in Egypt, till it was subdued by a foreign power. What would have been the state of agriculture, ship-building, or war, if those arts had been fixed in England two or three centuries ago ?

Dr. Brown will urge me with the authority of Plutarch, who largely extols the regulations of Egypt and of Sparta, and censures the Roman legislators for adopting nothing similar to them. But I beg leave to appeal from the authority of Plutarch, and of all the ancients, as by no means competent judges in this case. Imperfect as the science of government is at present, it is certainly much more perfect than it was in their time.

time. On the authority of the ancients, Dr. Brown might as well contend for another institution of the famed Egyptians ; viz. their obliging all persons to follow the occupations of their fathers ; and perhaps this might be no bad auxiliary to his prescribed mode of education, and prevent the springing up of faction in a state. It would likewise favour another object, which the doctor has professedly in view, viz. checking the growth of commerce.

Supposing this wise system of perpetuation had occurred to our ancestors in the feudal times, and that an assembly of old English barons, with their heads full of their feudal rights and services, had imitated the wise Spartans, and perpetuated the severe feudal institutions ; what would England at this day have been (with the unrivalled reputation of uniformity and constancy in

its laws) but the most barbarous, the weakest, and most distracted state in Europe? It is plain from fact, that divine providence had greater things in view in favour of these kingdoms; and has been conducting them through a series of gradual changes (arising from internal and external causes) which have brought us to our present happy condition; and which, if suffered to go on, will probably carry us to a pitch of happiness of which we can yet form no conception.

Had the religious system of our oldest forefathers been established on these wise and perpetual foundations, we had now been pagans, and our priests druids. Had our Saxon conquerors been endued with the same wisdom and foresight, we had been worshipping Thor and Woden; and had our ancestors, three centuries ago, persevered

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persevered in this spirit, we had been blind and priest-ridden papists. The greatest blessing that can befall a state, which is so rigid and inflexible in its institutions, is to be conquered by a people, who have a better government, and have made farther advances in the arts of life. And it is undoubtedly a great advantage which the divine being has provided for this world, that conquests and revolutions should give mankind an opportunity of reforming their systems of government, and of improving the science of it, which they would never have found themselves.

In the excellent constitution of nature, evils of all kinds, some way or other, find their proper remedy; and when government, religion, education, and every thing that is valuable in society seems to be in so fine

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a progress towards a more perfect state, is it not our wisdom to favour this progress; and to allow the remedies of all disorders to operate gradually and easily, rather than, by a violent system of perpetuation, to retain all disorders till they force a remedy? In the excellent constitution of the human body, a variety of outlets are provided for noxious humours, by means of which the system relieves itself when any slight disorders happen to it. But, if these outlets be obstructed, the whole system is endangered by the convulsions which ensue.

Some things in civil society do, in their own nature, acquire to be established, or fixed by law for a considerable time: but that part of the system, for the reasons mentioned above, will certainly be the most imperfect; and therefore it is the wisdom

dom of the legislature to make that part as small as possible, and to let the establishments, which are necessary, be as easy as is consistent with the tolerable order of society. It is an universal maxim, that the more liberty is given to every thing which is in a state of growth, the more perfect it will become ; and when it is grown to its full size, the more amply will it repay its wise parent, for the indulgence given to it in its infant state. A judicious father will bear with the forwardness of his children, and overlook many flights of youth ; which can give him no pleasure, but from the prospect they afford of his children becoming useful and valuable men, when the fire of youth is abated.

I do not pretend to define what degree of establishment is necessary for religion, or for many other articles in
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civil society : but it seems very clear that education requires none. And thus much I think is also clear, that every system of policy is too strict and violent, in which any thing that may be the instrument of general happiness, is under so much restraint, that that it can never reform itself from the disorders which may be incident to it ; when it is so circumstanced, that it cannot improve as far as it is capable of improvement, but that every reformation must necessarily be introduced from some other quarter ; in which case it must generally be brought about by force. Is it not a standing argument that religion, in particular, has been too much confined, in all countries, that the body of the clergy have never reformed themselves ; and that all reformations have ever been forced upon them, and have generally been attended with the most horrible persecutions,

secutions, and dangerous convulsions in the state? I cannot help thinking also, that every system of government is violent and tyrannical, which incapacitates men of the best abilities, and of the greatest integrity, from rendering their country any service in their power, while those who pay no regard to conscience may have free access to all places of power and profit.

It seems to be the uniform intention of divine providence, to lead mankind to happiness in a progressive, which is the surest, though the slowest method. Evil always leads to good, and imperfect to perfect. The divine being might, no doubt, have adopted a different plan, have made human nature and human governments perfect from the beginning. He might have formed the human mind with an intuitive knowledge of truth, without leading

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ing man through so many labyrinths of error. He might have made man perfectly virtuous, without giving so much exercise to his passions in his struggles with the habits of vice. He might have sent an angel, or have commissioned a man to establish a perfect form of civil government; and, *a priori*, this would seem to have been almost as essential to human happiness as any system of truth; at least, that it would have been a valuable addition to a system of religious truth: but tho' it would be impiety in us to pretend to fathom the depths of the divine councils, I think we may fairly conclude, that if this method of proceeding had been the best for us, he, whom we cannot conceive to be influenced by any thing but his desire to promote the happiness of his creatures, would have pursued it. But a contrary method has been adopted in every thing relating to us.

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How many falls does a child get before it learns to walk secure. How many inarticulate sounds precede those which are articulate. How often are we imposed upon by all our senses before we learn to form a right judgment of the proper objects of them. How often do our passions mislead us, and involve us in difficulties, before we reap the advantage they were intended to bring us in our pursuit of happiness; and how many false judgments do we make, in the investigation of all kinds of truth, before we come to a right conclusion. How many ages do errors and prejudices of all kinds prevail, before they are dissipated by the light of truth, and how general, and how long was the reign of false religion before the propagation of the true! How late was christianity, that great remedy of vice and ignorance, introduced!

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ced ! How slow and how confined its progress !

X In short, it seems to have been the intention of divine providence, that mankind should be, as far as possible, self taught ; that we should attain to every thing excellent and useful, as the result of our own experience and observation ; that our judgments should be formed by the appearances which are presented to them, and our hearts instructed by their own feelings. But by the unnatural system of rigid unalterable establishments, we put it out of our power to instruct ourselves, or to derive any advantage from the lights we acquire from experience and observation ; and thereby, as far as is in our power, we counteract the kind intentions of the deity in the constitution of the world, and in providing for a state of constant, though

though slow improvement in every thing.

A variety of useful lessons may be learned from our attention to the conduct of divine providence respecting us. When history and experience demonstrate the uniform method of divine providence to have been what has been above represented, let us learn from it to be content with the natural, tho' slow progress we are in to a more perfect state. But let us always endeavour to keep things in this progress. Let us, however, beware, lest by attempting to accelerate, we in fact retard our progress in happiness. But more especially, let us take heed, lest, by endeavouring to secure and perpetuate the great ends of society, we in fact defeat those ends. We shall have a thousand times more enjoyment of a happy and perfect form of govern-

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ment, when we can see in history the long progress of our constitution through barbarous and imperfect systems of policy ; as we are more confirmed in the truth, and have more enjoyment of it, by reviewing the many errors by which we were misled in our pursuit of it. If the divine being saw that the best form of government, that even he could have prescribed for us, would not have answered the end of its institution, if it had been imposed by himself ; much less can we imagine it could answer any valuable purpose, to have the crude systems (for they can be nothing more) of short-sighted men for ever imposed upon us.

Establishments, be they ever so excellent, still fix things somewhere ; and this circumstance, which is all that is pleaded for them amounts to,
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is with me the greatest objection to them. I wish to see things *in a progress* to a better state, and no obstructions thrown in the way of reformation.

In spite of all the fetters we can lay upon the human mind, notwithstanding all possible discouragements in the way of free inquiry, knowledge of all kinds, and religious knowledge among the rest, will increase. The wisdom of one generation will ever be folly in the next. And yet, tho' we have seen this verified in the history of near two thousand years, we persist in the absurd maxim of making a preceding generation dictate to a succeeding one, which is the same thing as making the foolish instruct the wise; for what is a lower degree of wisdom but comparative folly?

Had even Locke, Clarke, Hoadly, and others, who have gained immortal reputation by their freedom of thinking, but about half a century ago, been appointed to draw up a creed, they would have inserted in it such articles of faith, as myself, and hundreds more, should now think unscriptural, and absurd: nay, articles which they would have thought of great importance, we should think conveyed a reflection upon the moral government of God, and were injurious to virtue among men. And can we think that wisdom will die with us! no, our creeds, could we be so inconsistent with ourselves as to draw up any, would, I make no doubt, be rejected with equal disdain by our posterity.

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That ecclesiastical establishments have really retarded the reformation from popery is evident from the face of things in Europe. Can it be thought that all the errors and abuses which had been accumulating in the space of fifteen hundred years, should be rectified in less than fifty, by men educated with strong prejudices in favour of them all? and yet the Augsburg confession, I believe, stands unrepealed; the church of England is the same now that it was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and the church of Scotland is to this day in that imperfect and crude state in which *John Knox* left it.

Little did those great reformers, whose memory I revere, think what burdens they, who had boldly shaken off the load from their own shoulders,

were laying on those of others ; and that the moment they had nobly freed themselves from the yoke of servitude, they were signing an act to enslave all that should come after them ; forgetting the golden rule of the gospel, to do to others as we would that they should do to us.

Could religious knowledge have remained in the state in which the first reformers left it ; could the stone they had once moved from its seat, on the top of a precipice, have been stopped in its course, their provisions for perpetuation would have been wise and excellent ; but their eyes were hardly closed, before their children found that their fathers had been too precipitate. They found their own hands tied up by their unthinking parents, and the knots too many, and too tight for them to unloose.

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The great misfortune is, that the progress of knowledge is chiefly among the thinking few. The bulk of mankind, being educated in a reverence for established modes of thinking and acting, in consequence of their being established, will not hear of a reformation proceeding even so far as they could really wish, lest, in time, it should go farther than they could wish, and the end be worse than the beginning. And where there are great emoluments in a church, it is possessed of the strongest internal guard against all innovations whatever. Church livings must not be touched, and they may, if any thing else be meddled with. This makes the situation of sensible and conscientious men, in all establishments, truly deplorable. Before I had read that excellent work,
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intitled the *Confessional*, but much more since, it has grieved me to see the miserable shifts that such persons (whether in the church of England, or of Scotland) are obliged to have recourse to, in order to gild the pill, which they must swallow or starve; and to observe their poor contrivances to conceal the chains that gall them. But it grieves one no less, to see the rest of their brethren, hugging their chains and proud of them.

But let those gentlemen in the church, who oppose every step towards reformation, take care, lest they overact their parts, and lest some enterprizing persons, finding themselves unable to untie the Gordian knots of authority, should, like another Alexander the Great, boldly cut them all. Let them
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take care, lest, for want of permitting a few repairs in their ruinous house, it should at last fall all together about their ears. A number of spirited and conscientious men, openly refusing to enter into the church, or throwing up the livings which they hold upon those iniquitous and enslaving terms (and such men there have been in this country) would rouse the attention of the temporal heads of our spiritual church. They might see the necessity of an immediate and compleat reformation; and the alarm of churchmen, with their paultry expedients and com-promises, would come too late. The temper of these times would not bear a second St. Bartholomew. X

In the mean time, let the friends of liberty by no means give way
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to impatience. The longer it be before this reformation takes place, the more effectual it will probably be. The times may not yet be ripe for such an one as you would wish to acquiesce in, considering that, whenever it is made, it will probably continue as long as the last has done.

It was well for the cause of truth and liberty, that the Romish clergy at the first beginning of the reformation, held out with so much obstinacy against the smallest concessions; for had they but granted the cup to the laity, and been a little more decent in the article of indulgences, the rest of popery might have continued

“To scourge mankind for ten dark ages more.”

And

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And at the restoration here in England, had a few, a very few trifling alterations been complied with, such numbers of the presbyterians would have heartily united to the established church, as would have enabled it entirely to crush every other sect, to prevent the growing liberty of the press, and to have maintained for ages the most rigid uniformity. ✕ This observation may, perhaps, teach patience to one party, and prudence to the other.

Dissenters, even of the presbyterian persuasion, have, by no means, been free from the general infatuation of all other reformers. All the denominations of dissenters have made attempts to fix things by their own narrow standard; and prescribed confessions of faith, even with subscriptions, have been introduced among them. But
happily

happily for us, there have always been men of generous and enlarged minds, who, having no civil power to contend with, have had courage to stem the torrent ; and now, among those who are called the more rational part of the dissenters, things are not, upon the whole, to be complained of. No subscriptions to any articles of faith, or even to the new testament, is now required ; and ministers are excused, if they chuse not to give any confession of their own. To have preached and behaved like a christian, is deemed sufficient to recommend a man to the christian ministry. Unfettered by authority, they can pursue the most liberal plans of education. The whole business is to give the faculties of the mind their free play, and to point out proper objects of attention to students, without any concern what may be the result of their inquiries ; the business being

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being to make wise and useful men, and not the tools and abettors of any particular party.

If any person should think that religion is not to be put upon the same footing with other branches of knowledge (which they allow to require the aid of every circumstance favourable to their future growth) that since the whole of christianity was delivered at once, and is contained in the books of the new testament, there is no reason to expect more light than we already have with regard to it; and, therefore, that they are justified in fixing the knowledge of it where it *now* stands, I shall only say, that I sincerely pity their weakness and prejudice; as such an opinion can only proceed from a total ignorance of what has passed in the christian world, or from

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a bigot-

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a bigotted attachment to the authoritative institutions of fallible men.

To recur to Dr. Brown: he would raise the terms on which we are to live in society; so that, under his administration, a man could enjoy little more than bare security in the possession of his property, and that upon very hard conditions. The care he would take to shackle men's minds, in the first formation of their thinking powers, and to check their exertions when they were formed, would, I apprehend, put an effectual stop to all the noble improvements of which society is capable. Knowledge, particularly of the more sublime kinds, in the sciences of morals and religion, could expect no encouragement. He would have more restrictions laid upon the publication of books. He complains, page 103, that, in the late reign, de-
istical

istical publications proceeded almost without cognizance from the civil magistrate ; and asserts, Appendix, page 29, that there are *many* opinions or principles tending evidently to the destruction of society or freedom, and which, therefore, ought not to be tolerated in a well ordered free community.

The civil magistrate then, according to this writer, ought to control the press, and therefore prevent, by means of effectual penalties (or else he doth nothing) the publication of any thing, that might directly or indirectly, thwart his views of civil policy ; which, in England, comprehends the present form of our established religion. But so extensive is the connection of all kinds of truth, that if a man would keep effectually clear of the subject of religion, he

must not indulge a free range of thought near the confines of it. The subjects of metaphysics, morals, and natural religion would be highly dangerous. There might be heresy, or the foundation of heresy, without coming near revelation, or any of the peculiar doctrines of christianity. We must only be allowed to *think* for ourselves, without having the liberty of divulging, or, in any form, publishing our thoughts to others, not even to our children. A mighty privilege indeed! and for which we might think ourselves obliged to Dr. Brown, if it were in the power of man to deprive us of it. This is a privilege which the poor wretch enjoys who lives under the same roof with a Spanish inquisitor. The subjects of the grand seignior enjoy far greater privileges than those which Dr. Brown would indulge to Englishmen. For
the

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the greater part of them are allowed to educate their children in a religion which teaches them to regard Mohammed as an impostor. Nay, the pope himself permits those to live unmolested, and under his protection at Rome, who look upon that church, of which he calls himself the head, as founded on fraud and falsehood, and to educate their children in the same principles. Nor hath the pope, or the grand seignior, ever seen reason to repent of their indulgence.

Were any more laws restraining the liberty of the press in force, it is impossible to say how far they might be construed to extend. Those already in being are more than are requisite, and inconsistent with the interests of truth. Were they to extend farther, every author would lie at the mercy of the ministers of state, who might con-

demn indiscriminately, upon some pretence or other, every work that gave them umbrage ; under which circumstances might fall some of the greatest and noblest productions of the human mind, if such works could be produced in those circumstances. For if men of genius knew they could not publish the discoveries they made, they could not give free scope to their faculties in making and pursuing those discoveries. It is the thought of publication, and the prospect of fame which is, generally, the great incentive to men of genius to exert their faculties, in attempting the untrodden paths of speculation.

In those unhappy circumstances, writers would entertain a dread of every new subject. No man could safely indulge himself in any thing bold, enterprizing, and out of the vulgar

gar road ; and in all publications we should see a timidity incompatible with the spirit of discovery. If any towering genius should arise in those unfavourable circumstances, a Newton in the natural world, or a Locke, a Hutcheson, a Clarke, or a Hartley in the moral, the only effectual method to prevent their diffusing a spirit of enterprize and innovation, which is natural to such great souls, could be no other than that which Tarquin so significantly expressed, by taking off the heads of all those poppies which overlooked the rest. Such men could not but be dangerous, and give umbrage in a country where it was the maxim of the government, that every thing of importance should for ever remain unalterably fixed.

The whole of this system of uniformity appears to me to be founded

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ed on very narrow and short-sighted views of policy. A man of extensive views will overlook temporary evils, with a prospect of the greater good which may often result from, or be inseparably connected with them. He will bear with a few tares, lest, in attempting to root them out, he endanger rooting up the wheat with them. Unbounded free enquiry upon all kinds of subjects may certainly be attended with some inconvenience, but it cannot be restrained without infinitely greater inconvenience. The deistical performances Dr. Brown is so much offended at may have unsettled the minds of some people, but the minds of many have been more firmly settled, and upon better foundations than ever. The scheme of christianity has been far better understood, since those deistical writings have occasioned

casioned the subject to be more thoroughly discussed than it had been before.

Besides, if truth stand upon the false foundation of prejudice or error, it is an advantage to it to be unsettled; and the man who doth no more, and even means to do no more, is, in fact, its friend. Another person seeing its destitute and baseless condition, may be induced to set it upon its proper foundation. Far better policy would it be to remove the difficulties which still lie in the way of free enquiry, than to throw fresh ones into it. Infidels would then be deprived of their most successful method of attacking christianity, namely, insinuation; and christian divines might, with a more manly grace, engage with the champions of deism, and in fact engage with

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with more advantage, when they both fought on the same equal ground. As things are at present, I should be ashamed to fight under the shelter of the civil power, while I saw my adversary exposed to all the severity of it.

To the same purpose, I cannot help quoting the authority of Dr. Warburton, “ Nor less friendly is this
 “ liberty to the generous advocate
 “ of religion. For how could such
 “ an one, when in earnest convin-
 “ ced of the strength of evidence in
 “ his cause, desire an adversary whom
 “ the laws had before disarmed, or
 “ value a victory where the ma-
 “ gistrate must triumph with him?
 “ even I, the meanest in this con-
 “ troversy, should have been ashamed
 “ of projecting the defence of the great
 “ Jewish legislator, did not I know,
 “ that

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“ that his assailants and defenders skir-
“ mished under one equal law of li-
“ berty. And if my dissenting, in
“ the course of this defence, from
“ some common opinions needs an
“ apology, I should desire it may be
“ thought, that I ventured into this
“ train with greater confidence, that
“ I might shew, by not intrenching
“ myself in authorized speculations, I
“ put myself upon the same footing
“ with you [the deists] and would
“ claim no privilege that was not en-
“ joyed in common.” Divine Lega-
tion, page 7.

But sorry I am, that the paragraph which immediately follows, how proper soever it might be when it was written, would *now* look like a tantalizing of his unfortunate adversaries.

“ This, liberty, then, may you long
“ possess, know how to use, and
“ gratefully

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“ gratefully to acknowledge it. I
 “ say this, because one cannot, with-
 “ out indignation, observe, that, a-
 “ midst the full enjoyment of it, you
 “ still continue, with the meanest af-
 “ fection, to fill your prefaces with
 “ repeated clamours against the diffi-
 “ culties and discouragements attend-
 “ ing the exercise of free thinking ;
 “ and in a peculiar strain of modesty
 “ and reasoning, make use of this very
 “ liberty to persuade the world you
 “ still want it. In extolling liberty we
 “ can join with you, in the vanity of
 “ pretending to have contributed most
 “ to its establishment we can bear with
 “ you, but in the low cunning of pre-
 “ tending still to lie under restraints,
 “ we can neither join nor bear with
 “ you. There was, indeed, a time,
 “ and that within our memories, when
 “ such complaints were seasonable,
 “ and meritorious ; but, happy for
 “ you,

“ you, gentlemen, you have outlived
 “ it. All the rest is merely fir Mar-
 “ tin, it is continuing to fumble at the
 “ lute, though the mufic has been
 “ long over.”

Let Peter Annet (if he dare) write
 a comment on this paffage. So far
 are deifts from having free liberty to
 publifh their sentiments, that even ma-
 ny chriftians cannot fpeak out with
 fafety. In prefent circumftances, a
 chriftian divine is not at liberty to
 make ufe of thofe arguments which,
 he may think, would fupply the beft
 defence of chriftianity. What are, in
 the opinion of many, the very founda-
 tions of our faith, are in a ruinous con-
 dition, and muft be repaired before it
 will be to any purpofe to beautify and
 adorn the fuperftructure ; but the man
 who fhould have the true courage
 and judgment, to go near enough

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to

to such rotten foundations, would be thought to mean nothing less than to undermine them, and intirely destroy the whole fabric. His very brethren would stand off from him, think him in league with their adversaries ; and, by an ill judging zeal, might call in the destructive aid of the civil power to stop his hand. In consequence of which, notwithstanding his most laudable zeal in favour of our holy religion, he might stand upon the same pillory, and be thrown into the same prison with wretched and harmless infidels. Many undoubted friends of christianity, and men of the most enlarged minds, will know and feel what I mean.

Hitherto, indeed, few of the friends of free inquiry among christians have been more than partial advocates for it. If they find themselves under
any

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any difficulty with respect to their own sentiments, they complain, and plead strongly for the rights of conscience, of private judgment, and of free inquiry ; but when they have gotten room enough for themselves, they are quite easy, and in no pain for others. The papist must have liberty to write against pagans, mohammedans, and jews ; but he cannot bear with protestants. Writers in defence of the church of England justify their separation from the church of Rome, but with the most glaring inconsistency, call the protestant dissenters, schismatics ; and many dissenters, forgetting the fundamental principles of their dissent, which are the same that are asserted by all christians and protestants in similar circumstances, discourage every degree of liberty greater than they themselves have taken, and have as

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great an aversion to those they are pleased to call heretics, as papists have for protestants, or as Laud had for the old puritans.

But why should we confine our neighbour, who may want more room, in the same narrow limits with ourselves. The wider we make the common circle of liberty, the more of its friends will it receive, and the stronger will be the common interest. Whatever be the particular views of the numerous tribes of searchers after truth, under whatever denomination we may be ranked, whether we be called, or call ourselves christians, papists, protestants, dissenters, hereticks, or even deists (for all are equal here, all are actuated by the same spirit, and all engaged in the same cause) we stand in need of the same liberty of thinking, debating, and publishing. Let us, then,
as

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as far as our interest is the same, with one heart and voice, stand up for it. Not one of us can hurt his neighbour, without using a weapon which, in the hand of power, might as well serve to chastise himself.

The present state of the English government (including both the laws, and the administration, which often corrects the rigour of the law) may, perhaps, bear my own opinions without taking much umbrage; but I could wish to congratulate many of my brother free-thinkers, on the greater indulgence which their more heretical sentiments may require.

To the honour of the quakers be it spoken, that they are the only body of christians who have uniformly maintained the principles of christian liberty, and toleration. Every other body of men have turned persecutors

when they had power. Papists have persecuted the protestants, the church of England has persecuted the dissenters, and other dissenters in losing their name, lost that spirit of christian charity, which seemed to be essential to them. Short was their sunshine of power, and thankful may Britain, and the present dissenters be, that it was so. But the quakers, though established in Pennsylvania, have persecuted none. This glorious principle seems so intimately connected with the fundamental maxims of their sect, that it may be fairly presumed, the moderation they have hitherto shown is not to be ascribed to the smallness of their party, or to their fear of reprisals. For this reason, if I were to pray for the general prevalence of any one sect of christians (which I should not think it for the interest of christianity to take place,
even

even though I should settle the articles of it myself) it should be that of the quakers ; because, different as my opinions are from theirs, I have so much confidence in their moderation, that I believe they would let me live, write, and publish what I pleased unmolested among them. And this I own, is more than I could promise myself from any other body of christians whatever ; the presbyterians by no means excepted.

The object of this forced uniformity is narrow and illiberal, unworthy of human nature. Supposing it accomplished, what is it possible to gain by it, but, perhaps, a more obstinate and blind belief in the vulgar ; while men of sense, seeing themselves debarred the very means of conviction, must of course be infidels ? In those circumstances, it would really be an argument

gument of a man's want of spirit, of sense, and even of virtue to be a believer, because he would believe without sufficient evidence. Who would not, with every appearance of justice, suspect any cause, when he was not allowed to examine the arguments against it, and was only pressed with those in its favour?

What sensible and upright judge would decide a cause, where all the witnesses on one side were by violence prevented from giving their evidence? Those who converse with deists well know, that one of their strongest objections to christianity arises from hence, that none of the early writings against it are preserved. How much stronger, and even unanswerable, would that objection have been, if christianity had been from the beginning, so effectually protected by the civil magistrate,

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gistrate, that no person had dared to write against it at all. Such friends to the evidence and true interests of christianity are all those who would suppress deistical writings at this day !

Suppose any article in a system of faith, so established and guarded, to be wrong, which is certainly a very modest supposition ; let any of the advocates of this scheme say, how it is possible it should ever be rectified ; or that if the truth should insinuate itself, by any avenue which they had not sufficiently guarded, how it could bring its evidence along with it, so as to command the attention and acceptance which it deserved.

Indeed, it is not so much from the mistaken friends of truth that we apprehend these measures of rigid uniformity ; but rather from those who
would

would sacrifice truth, and every other consideration to public tranquillity. From those MERE STATESMEN who, looking upon all systems of religion to be equally false, and not able to bear examination, will not suffer that examination to take place ; for fear of destroying a system, which, however false, they imagine to be necessary to the peace and well being of the state. The most unrelenting persecution is to be apprehended, not from bigots, but from infidels. A bigot, who is so from a principle of conscience, may possibly be moved by a regard to the consciences of others ; but the man who thinks that conscience ought always to be sacrificed to political views, has no principle on which an argument in favour of moderation can lay hold. Was not Bolingbroke the greatest promoter of the schism bill in England,

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land, and Richlieu of the persecution of the protestants in France ?

I acknowledge with the statesman, that the proper object of the civil magistrate is the peace and well being of society, and that whatever tends to disturb that peace and well being, properly comes under his cognizance. I acknowledge several religious and moral, as well as political principles have a near connection with the well-being of society. But, as was more fully explained before, there are many cases, in which the happiness of society is nearly concerned, in which it would, nevertheless, be the greatest impropriety for the civil magistrate to interfere ; as in many of the duties of private life, the obligations of gratitude, &c. In all such cases, where the well-being of society is most nearly concerned, the civil magistrate has no
right

right to interfere, unless he can do it to good purpose. There is no difference, I apprehend, to be made in this case, between the right, and the wisdom of interference. If the interference would be for the good of the society upon the whole, it is wise and right; if it would do more harm than good, it is foolish and wrong. Let the sagacious statesman, therefore, consider, whether the interference of the civil magistrate be, in its own nature, calculated to prevent the violation of the religious and moral principles he may wish to enforce. I think it is clear, that when they are in danger of being violated, his presence is so far from tending to remedy the evil, that it must necessarily inflame it, and make it worse.

It

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It is universally understood, that REASON and AUTHORITY are two things, that they have generally been opposed to one another ; the hand of power, therefore, on the side of any set of principles cannot but be a suspicious circumstance. And though the injunction of the magistrate may silence *voices*, it multiplies *whispers* ; and those whispers are the things at which he has the most reason to be alarmed.

Besides, it is universally true, that where the civil magistrate has the greatest pretence for interfering in religious and moral principles, his interference (supposing there were no impropriety in it) is the least necessary. If the opinions and principles in question, be evidently subversive of all religion and all civil society,

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ciety, they must be evidently false, and easy to refute; so that there can be no danger of their spreading; and the patrons of them may safely be suffered to maintain them in the most open manner they chuse.

To mention those religious and moral principles which Dr. Brown produces, as the most destructive to the well being of society; namely, that *there is no God*, and that *there is no faith to be kept with heretics*. So far am I from being of his opinion, that is necessary to guard against these principles by severe penalties, and not to tolerate those who maintain them, that I think, of all opinions, surely such as these have nothing formidable or alarming in them. They can have no terrors but what the magistrate himself, by his ill-judged opposition, may give them

them. Persecution may procure friends to any cause, and possibly to this, but hardly any thing else can do it. It is unquestionable, that there are more atheists and infidels of all kinds in Spain and Italy, where religion is so well guarded, than in England; and it is, perhaps, principally owing to the laws in favour of christianity, that there are so many deists in this country.

For my own part, I cannot help thinking the principles of Dr. Brown very dangerous in a free state, and therefore cannot but wish they were exterminated. But I should not think that silencing him would be the best method of doing it. No, let him, by all means, be encouraged in making his sentiments public; both that their dangerous tendency, and their futility may more clearly appear.

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pear. Had I the direction of the press, he should be welcome to my *imprimatur* for any thing he should please to favour the world with; and ready, if I know myself, should I be, to furnish him with every convenience in my power for that purpose. It is for the interest of truth that every thing be viewed in fair and open day light, and it can only be some sinister purpose that is favoured by darkness or concealment of any kind. My sentiments may be fallacious, but if no body were allowed to write against me, how could that fallacy be made to appear? be the prayer of the magnanimous Ajax ever mine,

Ποιησον δ' αἰθερην, δος δ' οφθαλμοισιν ἰδεσθαι·
 Εν δὲ φαιε καὶ ολισσον Homer. Lib. 17. v. 646.

This writer artfully mentions only three opinions or principles, one
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under each class of religion, morals, and politics, as necessary to be guarded by civil penalties, and not to be tolerated; and no doubt he has chosen those principles which a friend to his country would most wish to have suppressed, and with regard to which, he would least scrupulously examine the means that might be used to suppress them. This, Britons, is the method in which arbitrary power has ever been introduced: this is well known to have been the method used by the thirty tyrants of Athens. They first cut off persons the most generally obnoxious, and such as the standing laws could not reach. And even that intelligent people were so far duped by their resentment, that they were not aware, that the very same methods might be employed to take off the worthiest men in the city.

And if ever arbitrary power should gain ground in England, it will be by means of the seeming necessity of having recourse to illegal methods, in order to come at opinions or persons generally obnoxious. But when these illegal practices have once been authorized, and have passed into precedents, all persons and all opinions will lie at the mercy of the prime minister, who will animadvert upon whatever gives him umbrage.

Happy would it be for the unsuspecting sons of liberty, if their enemies would say, at first, how far they meant to proceed against them. To say, as Dr. Brown does, that there are many opinions and principles which ought not to be tolerated, and to instance only in three, is very suspicious and alarming. Let him say, in the
name

name of all the friends of liberty, I challenge him or any of his friends to say, how many more he has thought proper not to mention, and what they are; that we may not admit the foot of arbitrary power, before we see what size of a body the monster has to follow it.

Such is the connection and gradation of opinions, that if once we admit there are *some* which ought to be guarded by civil penalties, it will ever be impossible to distinguish, to general satisfaction, between those which may be tolerated, and those which may not. No two men living, were they questioned strictly, would give the same list of such fundamentals. Far easier were it to distinguish the exact boundaries of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms in nature, which yet naturalists find to be impossible.

impossible. But a happy circumstance it is for human society, that, in religion and morals, there is no necessity to distinguish them at all. The more important will guard themselves by their own evidence, and the less important do not deserve to be guarded.

Political principles, indeed, may require penal sanctions; but then it is for the very same reason that religious and moral principles require none. It is because they do not carry their own evidence along with them. Governments actually established must guard themselves by penalties and intolerance, because forms of government, and persons presiding in them, being nearly arbitrary, it may not be very evident that a different government, or different governors, would not be better for a state. Laws relating to
treason

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treason are to be considered as arising from the principle of self-preservation. But even with respect to civil government, it is better not to guard every thing so strongly as that no alteration can ever be made in it. Nay, alterations are daily proposed, and daily take place in our civil government, in things both of great and small consequence. They are improvements in religion only that receive no countenance from the state : a fate singular and hard !

Besides, so many are the subtle distinctions relating to religion and morals, that no magistrate, or body of magistrates, could be supposed to enter into them ; and yet, without entering into them, no laws they could make would be effectual. To instance in the first of Dr. Brown's principles, and the most essential of them, viz. the
being

being of a God. The magistrate must define strictly what he means by the term God, otherwise Epicureans and Spinozists might be no atheists; or Arians or Athanasians might be obnoxious to the law. The magistrate must likewise punish, not only those who directly maintain the principles of Atheism (for evasions are so easy to find, that such laws would hurt nobody) but he must punish those who do it indirectly; and what opinions are there not, in religion, morals, and even natural philosophy, which might not be said to lead to Atheism? The doctrine of equivocal generation, for instance, might certainly be thought of this kind, as well as many others, which have been very harmlessly maintained by many good christians.

I am sensible, that in the few particulars which Dr. Brown has thought proper

proper to mention, his intolerant principles are countenanced by Mr. Locke; but, as far as I can recollect, these are all the opinions which Locke would not tolerate; whereas this writer asserts there are many; so that he must provide himself with some other authority for the rest. Besides I make no doubt, the great Mr. Locke would, without the least reluctance, have given up any of his assertions, upon finding so bad an use made of them, and that the consequences of them were so very unfavourable to his own great object, and contradictory to his leading principles; and that he would, with indignation, have given up any adherents to arbitrary power, who, from such a pretence as this, should claim his protection from the generous pursuit of the friends of liberty, of reason, and of mankind. And, after all, the controversy is not about men,

men, but principles. And so great an enemy as Mr. Locke to all authority in matters of opinion, would not have been so inconsistent as to have excepted his own.

Besides, as was in some measure observed before, all these systems of uniformity, in political or religious institutions, are the highest injustice to posterity. What natural right have we to judge for them, any more than our ancestors had to judge for us? our ancestors, from the time of the Britons, had, no doubt, as high an opinion of their political and religious institutions as we can have of ours. But should we not have thought the fate of Great-Britain singularly unhappy, if they had been entailed upon us? and the very same reason of complaint will our posterity have, if we take any methods to perpetuate
what

what we approve, as best for ourselves in our present circumstances; for farther than this we cannot pretend to see.

Let us, by all means, make our own circumstances as easy as possible; but let us lay posterity under no difficulty in improving theirs, if they see it convenient: rather, let all plans of policy be such as will easily admit of extension, and improvements of all kinds, and that the least violence, or difficulty of any kind, may attend the making of them. This is, at least, very desirable, and I believe it is far from being impracticable. However, though it should not be thought proper to unfix any thing which is at present established, let us proceed no farther than is manifestly necessary in those establishments.

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I am not pleading against religious establishments in all cases ; but only argue against fixing every thing so unalterably, that if a change in any particular, should be desired by a great majority of the clergy themselves, they should not be able to accomplish it, without the danger of throwing every thing into confusion. Such rigid establishments imply the authors of them to be well persuaded of their own infallibility. For no man who could suppose it possible for himself to be mistaken, would think it was reasonable, that, after the mistake was discovered, and universally acknowledged to be a mistake, all persons (if they really would enjoy the advantage of the establishment) should ever after be obliged to affirm, that they believed it to be no mistake, but perfectly agreeable to truth.

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How far this is the case with the church of England, let those of her clergy say, who may understand the subject of religion a little better than the first reformers, just emerging from the darkness of popery ; who may have some reluctance to subscribe what they do not believe, and who may feel, notwithstanding every evasion to which they can have recourse, that a church preferment is dearly bought at the expence of a solemn falsehood. I do not appeal to those who may really believe all they subscribe, or to those who may subscribe, without thinking at all, or to those who would wait upon any minister of state in the world with a *carte blanche* ready signed. In saying this, I even hint no more than what many of the greatest ornaments of the church

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have

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have said again and again ; that some things, in our present establishment are wrong, and want reformation ; and that there are thinking and unthinking, honest and dishonest men in this, as well as in every other profession.

Posterity, it may be said, will never complain of our institutions, when they have been educated in strong and invincible attachment to them. It is true ; and had we been pagans or papists, through a similar system of education, fixed in a more early period, we should not have complained. We, like the old Spartans, or the sons of bigotry in Spain and Portugal at present, might have been hugging our chains, and even proud of them. But other persons, who could have made a comparison between our actual condition,

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dition, and what it would have been, had those institutions not been made, would have complained for us. They would have seen us to be a less great, wise, and happy people; which affords the same argument against throwing difficulties in the way of future improvements.

Highly as we think of the wisdom of our ancestors, we justly think ourselves, of the present age, wiser, and, if we be not blinded by the mere prejudice of education, must see, that we can, in many respects, improve upon the institutions they have transmitted to us. Let us not doubt; but that every generation in posterity will be as much superior to us in political, and in all kinds of knowledge, and that they will be able to improve upon the best civil and religious institutions that we can prescribe for them.

them. Instead then of adding to the difficulties, which we ourselves find in making the improvements we wish to introduce, let us make this great and desirable work easier to them than it has been to us.

However, such is the progress of knowledge, and the enlargement of the human mind, that, in future time, notwithstanding all possible obstructions thrown in the way of human genius, men of great and exalted views will undoubtedly arise, who will see through and detest our narrow politics ; when the ill-advisers and ill-advised authors of these illiberal and contracted schemes will be remembered with infamy and execration : when, notwithstanding their talents as statesmen or writers, and though they may have pursued the same mind-enslaving schemes by more artful,

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artful, and less sanguinary methods, they will be ranked among the Bonners and the Gardiners of past ages. They must have been worse than Bonners and Gardiners, who could pursue the same ends by the same means, in this more humane and more enlightened age.

This seems to be the time, when the minds of men are opening to large and generous views of things. Politics are more extended in practice, and better understood in theory. Religious knowledge is greatly advanced, and the principle of *universal toleration* is gaining ground apace. Schemes of ecclesiastical policy, which, in times of barbarity, ignorance, and superstition, were intimately interwoven with schemes of civil policy, and which, in fact, made the greatest part of the old political mixed constitution,

stitution, have been gradually excluded ; till, at present, though ecclesiastical power be looked upon as an useful support and auxiliary of civil government, it is pretty much detached from it. And the more sensible part of mankind are evidently in a progress to the belief, that ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction, being things of a totally different nature, ought, if possible, to be wholly disengaged from one another. Religious sentiments, with respect to their influence on civil society, will perhaps be regarded, in time, as a theory of morals, only of a higher and more perfect kind, excellent to enforce a regard to magistracy, and the political duties, but improperly adopted into the same system and enforced by the same penalties. Till we know whether this work, which seems to be going forward in several

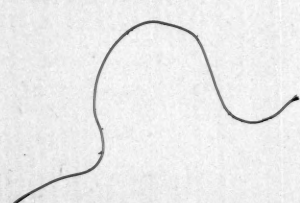
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parts of Europe, be of God, or not, let us not take, at least, any rigid and violent methods to oppose it, but patiently wait the issue; unless, in the mean time, the disorders of the state absolutely force us into violent measures. At present, notwithstanding some trifling alarm, perhaps artfully raised and propagated, may seem to give a handle to the friends of arbitrary power to make use of some degree of coercion, more gentle measures seem better adapted to ensure tranquillity.

England hath hitherto taken the lead in almost every thing great and good, and her citizens stand foremost in the annals of fame, as having shaken off the fetters which hung upon the human mind, and called it forth to the exertion of its noblest powers. And her constitution

tion has been so far from receiving any injury from the efforts of these her free-born enterprizing sons, that she is, in part, indebted to them for the unrivalled reputation she now enjoys, of having the best system of policy in Europe. After weathering so many real storms, let us not quit the helm at the apprehension of imaginary dangers, but steadily hold on in what, I trust, is the most glorious course that a human government can be in. Let all the friends of liberty and human nature join to free the minds of men from the shackles of narrow and impolitic laws. Let us be free ourselves, and leave the blessings of freedom to our posterity.

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